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DRIFTING
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BREAKERS!

BY
A SUSSEX PEER



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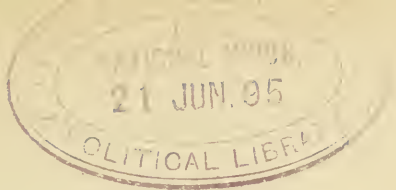
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DRIFTING TOWARDS THE BREAKERS!

PART I.

“RESOLVED:—That the Ministry may be assured of the
“enthusiastic and strenuous support of the Liberal Party in
“whatever measures it adopts to secure that the House of
“Commons shall be the paramount authority in the State.”—
*Meeting of the National Liberal Association at Portsmouth,
February 14th, 1894.*

I.

IN the above Resolution, passed by the National Liberal Association, we find, precisely traced, the lines of the form of Government which it is proposed to substitute for the existing Constitution of England,—an Elective Chamber, “paramount in the State,” that is to say, “paramount” over the Upper House of Legislature, if it exists,—and (if this Single Chamber is to possess “paramount” authority in the State) necessarily “paramount” over the Crown itself.

II.

For more than two centuries England has enjoyed a remarkable immunity from conflicts between the Parliament and the Crown. In view of the violence

of the controversies which, from time to time, naturally and necessarily, divide political and Parliamentary parties, this very immunity from civil conflicts is the most striking testimony we can wish for to the self-restraint and good sense and moderation with which the Parliament has avoided coming into collision with the Crown, and to the wisdom and prudence with which the Crown has been careful to act in deference to the opinion and wishes of the Nation. In a word — the unbroken experience of two hundred years has proved that the Monarchical and Parliamentary system of this country has, by the test of existence, proved itself admirably adapted to the character and requirements of this people.

III.

And yet, as by a thunderbolt in a clear sky, this spell of immunity is to be broken ! But how ? And for what cause ? What possible quarrel can the Parliament have with the Crown ? To all outward seeming there never was a period in English history when the relations between the People and the Sovereign were more cordial — or seemed more firmly rooted — more unassailable — less likely to be disturbed. No English statesman of eminence — not a writer in any of the leading “ Press ” of the day has, as yet, called in question the relations between the Sovereign and the People. Acting upon the wholesome and loyal tradition which forbids the Sovereign’s name to be dragged into the ordinary polemics of English party warfare, a tradition which has for so long been sacredly observed and respected by both parties, it

appears that neither the "Press" nor the statesmen of the time have thought that the fateful moment had, as yet, arrived for frankly and fearlessly speaking what is in their minds—and what must, at such a crisis, be uppermost in their thoughts. So that, owing to this reticence, honourable and loyal as the motive of it may be—and is—there are tens of thousands of persons who would be extremely puzzled to place their finger on the weak spot in the relations between Crown and People, or who would, after the most diligent search, see the slightest prospect of any conflict between them. On the one hand,—as they see,—the Crown is absolutely beyond any suspicion—which in these days would be a ludicrous absurdity—of any design to encroach a hair's breadth upon the liberties or rights of the people,—or even to thwart their wishes. On the other hand, at no time has the personality of Sovereignty been so popular. Those nearest the Throne, never miss an opportunity of listening to the wants of the poorer classes,—of studying their requirements and alleviating their sorrows and burdens. The People have seen the Heir to the Throne as President,—a hardworking, indefatigable President,—presiding over a body of Commissioners intrusted with the noble duty of investigating—and of remedying—the crying wants of labour and poverty. A Royal work which well befits an English Prince! The People do not forget these acts. When the Duke of York, with his young wife, made a Royal visit to the Midlands, the heart of the masses went out to the Royal pair. When an heir to the Throne was born to them in the beginning of the year 1894 there was but one serious discordant note in

the general tribute of affectionate good wishes from the Nation to the Royal parents and their Sovereign mother. Unfortunately, it fell to the lot of the London County Council to gain an unenviable notoriety as having a Chairman, who alone, of almost all the official heads of the governing bodies of all the great centres of population throughout the country, refused himself, either as Chairman, or in his capacity as Councillor, to propose to the Council a vote of congratulation to the Royal parents and the Crown on the birth of a Prince and Heir to the Throne. It was a jarring, unpleasant incident, to say the least of it, and significant as marking a feeling in the representative Government of the capital of this Empire which could not be misunderstood. Democrats seem to delight in these personal discourtesies, however petty and useless. In this case, such discourtesy was even the more remarkable from the fact that the Chairman* had but lately received a mark of Royal favour from the hand of the Sovereign, which hand—as soon as the honour so bestowed upon him was safe—he turned and struck. The Democrats, no doubt, are entitled to make all the capital they can of the fact that the Metropolis, through its representatives, gave no sign of its displeasure or of protest or censure at their Chairman's petty exhibition of political feeling. But, be that as it may—and fully recognising the significance of the act having been acquiesced in by the representatives of such a body as the Governing Council of London—we may take it that, on the whole, the masses of the population showed themselves, through their numberless

* Sir J. Hutton.

representatives, loyal and affectionate to Royalty on the occasion of the birth of an Heir to the Throne,—an occasion excellently fitted to test the national sentiment. If the Sovereignty is popular personally on social grounds—as it is—and ought to be—is it less so on political grounds? Can it be said by any possibility that the nation and the people of all classes—have one single Constitutional grievance or complaint against the political conduct of the Crown? Such a notion would be scouted by the masses themselves—and yet!—yet with all this superficial tranquillity, all this apparent harmony between the People and their Sovereign—that is, practically, in a political point of view, between the two great powers of the State, the Commons and the Crown,—with all this blue sky overhead, a little cloud “no bigger than a man’s hand” is rising on the horizon, which may eventually overspread the heavens and overshadow the land with the mighty tempest of a struggle between Crown and Parliament. Disguise the thought as you may, we have to reconcile ourselves to the truth that if such an irreconcilable conflict takes place, Civil War must in these days as inevitably result from it as the Parliamentary War resulted from it in the seventeenth century. But then we shall be asked what is to be the cause of this irreconcilable conflict. Is it inevitable? Why should it occur? Let us see:—

IV.

Can we indeed grasp in its full reality what Civil war means? It is difficult to take it seriously. To

many minds it only opens up a hazy and rather theatrical vision of Roundheads and Cavaliers, of buff jerkins and yellow boots, very long swords, and spurs nearly as long, of plumed hat and slashed hose—shadowy things of a very distant past. To the more serious and reflective eye, Civil war, wherever it occurs, presents a proof—eternal in its truth, but too often forgotten—or ignored—that unjust taxation, tyrannical legislation, unrestricted absolutism, will not be tolerated by any nation beyond a certain limit, whether the tyranny comes from above,—as in this country, from Stuart absolutism in the past, or, from below,—as threatened in the future, from the despotism of an autocratic but democratic Government. *Mutatis mutandis*, similar results would ensue from totally dissimilar causes, and an attack on the Throne by Parliament for the purpose of substituting a purely Democratic autocracy at the close of the nineteenth century would as surely result in a Civil war as the overbearing tyranny of the Stuart Kings led to the war with Parliament in 1642. Two centuries and more have passed since the great Parliamentary war, and it was not until two years ago, when the Loyalists of the North of Ireland gave an ominously warning note to the rulers of this country that they would resist to the death a measure passed by the English Commons, which they believed to be fatal to their liberties, that Englishmen began to awake to the consciousness that, in the sister island at any rate, a Civil war was not an impossibility.

V.

And very far indeed was it from being an impossibility. That Ireland was saved from the horrors of a Civil war, which would have been the more bitter and savage from the fury of religious hate which would have been imported into it, and would, therefore, have possessed a special and savage characteristic of its own, which was, to a great degree, absent during the English Civil war,—was owing to that House of Lords which is now marked down for destruction by the same statesmen, the same party, which endeavoured to put Ulster under a parliament it loathed. Ireland has many reasons, written in letters of blood, to remember the man who destroyed the House of Peers in 1649. Drogheda does not forget Oliver Cromwell. And now, perhaps, it may be possible that Ulster will have as good reason to remember the modern Cromwell, if he succeeds in destroying the Peers, as Drogheda had to remember the massacres of its children by the man who destroyed the House of Lords two centuries ago. It is just possible that Ulster blood may kindle a little at the thought that the House of Parliament, which stood by it in the hour of Ulster's danger, is now to suffer for its action. Ulstermen would indeed belie the reputation of Irishmen, if, at the proper moment, they failed to show some little practical gratitude to the House which had saved them from the tyranny which menaced them, and from the hated enemy who, but for the Peers of England, might have had his foot on their necks at this moment.

VI.

But it is doubtful whether the warning of Ulster would be sufficient to awaken our countryman in England to a sense of danger. What was possible in turbulent Ireland would still be, an Englishman would think, impossible in England. Civil war in Connemara was just possible. Civil war in Sussex or Hampshire seemed an unimaginable anachronism. And even now, with the warning of Ulster still ringing in his ears, with the example of Ulster before him—that there are still political causes in peaceful Great Britain which must be defended by force of arms,—if an ordinary Englishman, not accustomed nor inclined to look very far ahead into the political future, were to be told that his country was likely to become the theatre of Civil war, with all its incalculable calamities, before he was many years older, he would probably entertain a strong suspicion that his informant was a person of disordered intellect, or at any rate, the victim of a mis-placed and exaggerated pessimism. But there would perhaps be one thing even more startling to him than such an announcement:—If his informant went a step further, and told him that his country, the mother of Parliaments, as we have been told from the days of our callowest school boyhood, the model of Constitutional Government, was about to destroy its Parliamentary system, to massacre its own progeny, to be the Medea as well as the Mother of Parliaments, to allow the whole Constitution to be overthrown, perhaps without a struggle!—whatever were his suspicions before, they would now be ripened at once into an absolute certainty of his informant's mental weakness.

VII.

Nevertheless, he himself might possibly prove eventually to be the one of the twain who was the most mistaken. At first, it certainly is most difficult so to frame one's mind as to believe that after two centuries and a half of freedom from all threats and danger of Civil war, now, at the end of the nineteenth century, with all our boasted civilization, our vaunted progress, our supposed superiority over other countries as a constitutional country, with a firm and fixed form of Government, that now there should be even the veriest "shade of a shade of a shadow" of anything like an approaching possibility of those institutions not only being attacked but surrendered,—without a blow,—to the enemies of those institutions. But what seems to be impossible at first sight, becomes, on reflection, not only not impossible, but very probable, if the position is not fairly grasped, and the situation more clearly understood than is evidently the case at present. Much indeed of the danger in the future lies in the want of knowledge of the facts,—and of their tendency,—of the present situation in the mind of the ordinary elector, whose pursuits, business occupations, and modes of life do not as a rule give him much leisure to look beyond the immediate future. To use a metaphor—any light which may show, however dimly, the reefs and shoals ahead of the Vessel of State, however distant they may be, may perhaps awaken some of the crew—slumbering in their watch in a treacherous security—to a sense of danger, and may help to save the ship with all its priceless cargo of

lives, and still more priceless cargo, the traditions of a great nation. Clarendon speaks of his countrymen as being "possessed," as a national characteristic, of "laziness and sleep in the most visible article of danger." Englishmen have in 1894 the same fatal characteristic—as in 1642—unreadiness. They will not forecast the future. When a cyclone bursts over their heads they will meet it with all the bravery of their race, but Clarendon's reproach seems as applicable now as it was two centuries ago. Let us try, however, or, at all events, let the Constitutional party try, to redeem themselves from the reproach of the great historian, and for once to be found on guard with their arms in their hands when the enemy appears at their gates. When it becomes more clearly understood that this attack upon the House of Lords, with which I am going to deal, is not only an attack on that House but on the Throne and all that is comprised in the words Constitutional Government:—When it is understood that it is an impossibility to separate the existence of the Throne from the other parts of the constitution—that the Lords cannot be separated from the Crown,—that if one falls, the other falls—that no outward semblance could be invented (even supposing the democracy were in a mood to veil their revolutionary designs by any thin disguises—which is very improbable), so as to combine the existence of a monarchy, such as ours has been, with the democratic pretensions of a despotic Single Chamber, we shall have advanced an important step forward towards obtaining a true perception of the full extent of

the perils which are involved in this movement against the Upper House.

VIII.

I venture, then, to propound the question. Is it an impossibility that, in no very remote future, the antagonism of the principles, which have suddenly come to the front, may be found so irresistible, that it would be senseless optimism to affect to believe that they were capable of a peaceful solution? And to that question I would venture to give a reply:—We are “Drifting” with a momentum, which at any moment may be accidentally accelerated by some fortuitous unforeseen accident, into a speed, which would leave little time for reflection or preparation, towards a political “impasse,” from which one party, at least,—could not escape, save through one of two alternatives,—the one a weak and craven surrender of what ought not to be surrendered,—the other a resort to the extreme measure of resistance; in fact, the question which will soon come before us, in plain words, will be this—“Are the Institutions of this country, as they now exist, worth defending? And secondly, if so, are we men enough to fight for them?”

IX.

To say that these remarks are principally addressed to those who are members of the great Political Party, which is pledged by its traditions, by its honour, by the very conditions of its existence, to preserve and defend the Throne, is needless; but none the less are they directed to those of the moderate Democratic party who,

while chafing at the restraints imposed upon legislation by the existence of the Upper House, as they believe, in an objectionable manner and degree, and while considering that House a hindrance to the advancement of measures such as they approve, and while desirous of seeing such checks and trammels put aside, if it were possible to do so, by constitutional methods, would shrink from any course of action which, however much it fulfilled their wishes, could only do so at the cost of what was even dearer than the attainment of those aims, the existence, that is to say, of the whole constitutional system of this country. In the minds of thousands it would be one thing—and a good thing—to destroy the Upper House; but another and very different thing to attack the throne. This political section would shrink from destroying the monarchy,—and sooner than do so would accept the existing evils. Show the politician of this character that to destroy the one would be to destroy the other, and he would soon perceive that it would be infinitely better to endure the existing evils of the Upper House, reformed as it might be in a hundred ways, rather than place himself, by destroying that House, under a form of Government a thousand times worse than the system he had just destroyed.

PART II.

I.

Well, then, the House of Lords is to be attacked. There will be the usual chorus of protests that such a cry has been raised before. What has been, will be. It has failed before, it will fail again. It is quite true that the attack has been often made and hitherto always failed. But why did it fail? Because it was led by irresponsible leaders, demagogue agitators, pothouse politicians, whose names were unknown beyond the palings of Hyde Park, by men without character, without authority, by men whom it was easy and safe to despise and treat with scorn. Is that the case now? Assuredly not. A rabble, armed with bludgeon and pitchfork, attacking a fortified citadel, bristling with Armstrongs, is a ludicrous spectacle. Besieged by a force of drilled and disciplined troops, with the full equipment of all the deadliest weapons of science, led by the best and most distinguished Generals of the day—the fortress is at once in peril, and the garrison had better stand to their arms. It is because the attack has passed from the hands of irresponsible agitators to the keeping of responsible statesmen of the highest character and authority that it has risen at one bound from the lowest and most contemptible depth to the gravest and most solemn and highest political standard. It is no longer the Hyde Park orator who leads this seditious movement; It is Mr. Gladstone—It is no longer

the petty demagogue who shouts for the downfall of the Lords; It is the Prime Minister of England. You may sneer at Mr. Burns and laugh at Mr. Labouchere, but you cannot as reasonable beings, pooh-pooh Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, and the great Liberal meetings at Portsmouth and at Leeds, where, at the first, the leaders of the Liberal Party pledged themselves to the uncompromising policy of total abolition—and where, at the second, Leeds, the delegates of the extremer section of the democratic party resolved upon a definite course of action,—a little more temporizing outwardly, but, in effect, as uncompromising and fatal as the policy of the Portsmouth gathering. It would be unworthy silliness to ignore the difference between the political position of this question in 1893 and its position in 1894. And we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that—explain it how you may—call it a snap division if you will—a Resolution to abolish the Lords was carried in the Commons in this Session of 1894 by a majority—small if you will—but still a majority; and we may then ask ourselves whether, as that Resolution was proposed and carried by a private Member only, would it not be an absolute certainty that a Resolution or Bill embodying the same objects, with the weight and support of the Government at its back, would be carried by a greater majority?

II.

Let us suppose that the Electorate has been appealed to by the Ministry, “for inspiration and guidance,” as Lord Rosebery phrases it, in this campaign against the

Upper House. Let us try to trace, in imagination, the course of events which, however, may be foretold in this case with something approaching to mathematical certainty: The constituencies, we will suppose, have endorsed the policy of the Ministry, and have sent them back to Westminster fully armed and equipped with the mandate they asked for, to destroy the Upper House. Parliament meets. The Ministers are pinned to their pledges by their democratic followers, and they are called upon to proceed at once to the execution of the House of Peers, which the constituencies had condemned to death. And now begin the troubles of the Ministry. Abolish the Lords! Certainly. If you can—but how are the Ministry to do it? The difficulty of the situation now becomes a little more apparent and a trifle more embarrassing in proportion as a nearer approach to the process of execution, makes its gravity and its consequences be more carefully weighed and appreciated. At first sight it seemed so easy to shout, “Down with the Lords!” It was a cheap and safe display of democratic courage. There is always something fascinating, to a certain kind of intelligence, in defying authority and denouncing the powers that be, when it can be done safely, without responsibility, and with the hope and the purpose of gaining votes. There is something almost ridiculous in the glib way in which thousands of meetings, with Cabinet Ministers at their head, filled with democratic ardour, have yelled for the downfall of the Lords,—and yet, when the time comes to act, they know not what to do. They are paralyzed if the simple question is put to them—How will you do

it? Do away with the Lords, do away with the "veto!" But how is even the "veto" to be done away with? However, it is too late for the Ministers to turn back, and they have to grapple with the stern problem of how they are to fulfil their pledges. The Prime Minister asked for a mandate from the Democracy, and the Leeds Conference gave him what he asked for, and we will suppose the electorate has endorsed the mandate of the Leeds Conference. How are the Ministers to begin their campaign against the Upper House? Lord Rosebery and Mr. Labouchere have each discovered a method. Lord Rosebery points out in his speech at Birmingham, May 24th, 1894, that their object can be effected by a Bill agreed to conjointly by both Houses of Parliament. He says, "It can "only be done by a Bill passed by both Houses putting "an end to one branch of the legislature." Mr. Labouchere suggests that any trifling opposition of the Lords to the Bill for their own annihilation might easily be extinguished by the creation of five hundred Peers. It is almost impossible to understand how the Prime Minister can have been led into such an extraordinary lapse of thought as to imagine that the consent of the two Houses of Parliament would be sufficient for the abolition of one of them. Why should a Prime Minister imagine that a Bill dealing with the most vital principles of Government would be allowed to pass without the Royal Assent, while every Bill, however unimportant and trifling the objects may be, has to be submitted to the Royal Assent? It is, of course, a complete mistake on the part of the Prime Minister. If it is not a merely

momentary forgetfulness, it becomes curious and interesting, as showing how this Democratic Minister has learnt to ignore the very existence of the Crown as a legislative factor. The assent of the Crown would be necessary to any Bill, whether dealing with the Constitution or with a Highway Bill. Whatever Lord Rosebery may wish, no such Bill would be operative without the Royal Assent. Would that assent ever be given? Now, even supposing, which it is idle to do, that the Upper House could be induced to sign its own death warrant, and wished to join the Lower House in a suicidal measure, it would be a cruel libel upon the Sovereign of England to suppose that he would be guilty of such ineffable infamy as to give the Royal Assent to a measure having for its object the subversion of the Constitution of which he is the head. There is but one answer an English Sovereign could give to such a measure—*Le Roy s'avisera*.

III.

What was Mr. Labouchere's proposal? To create five hundred peers, who would first take the oaths of a peer, and then perjure themselves. It was a proposal founded upon the precedent, save the proposed perjury, of the Reform Act of 1832. But when Mr. Labouchere proposes to send five hundred men to the Upper House as peers, how does he propose to create them? It is not the House of Commons which creates peerages. It is, unfortunately for Mr. Labouchere's proposal, the Sovereign who alone has the power of creating peers. And here again, as in Lord

Rosebery's case, there is a marked, and, in this case probably intentional, ignoring of the existing rights of the Crown. It is, no doubt, a delight to the Democrat to insult the Sovereign, but, ignore the Sovereign as they will, these new peerages can only be brought to life by the will of the Sovereign. But could the Sovereign use his Royal Prerogative for the purpose of sending a resistless revolutionary force into the Upper Chamber with the avowed object of destroying it? Could the Sovereign of England, holding the Constitution of this Empire in his hands as a trust—a solemn trust—in the eyes of his country and before his God, could he be so base a traitor to his oaths, his dynasty, to those of his subjects who are ready to follow him to the death, as to call together a rabble of riff-raff, by virtue of his own Royal Prerogative, to override freedom of debate by brute force, and shatter the Constitution, and, eventually, the throne, which but a few moments before these Sans-culottes would, in their Parliamentary oaths, have sworn to defend? But even if the Sovereign gave way, he not only would have signed the death warrant of his own dynasty as well as of the Upper House, but he would have raised a very bitter feeling in the minds of the constitutionalists of the country. Constitutionalists would certainly raise the question, in a serious way, before some adequate tribunal, whether a Royal prerogative, constitutional in itself, can be used by the Sovereign for an unconstitutional object. And the Sovereign would have to face not only the attacks of the enemies of his throne but the bitter feeling of resentment on the part of the Constitutional party, whose trust he had betrayed.

IV.

But in this rather solemn drama comes an element of comedy. Lord Rosebery has a singular objection to Mr. Labouchere's proposal. In his Birmingham speech Lord Rosebery says, "There is this further objection. "When you (Mr. Labouchere) get your Peers inside the "House of Lords are you quite certain what they will do?" He doubts the success of it, and objects to that proposal for the remarkable reason that he does not believe that in the whole Liberal Party—not even in Northampton—not even amongst the Nonconformists, conscientious party as they are known to be, not even in the National Liberal Association, not even amongst the Scotchmen he so adoringly praised at Edinburgh, not even amongst his associates in the betting ring, nor on the race course he so much affects, not even with the assistance of Mr. Schnadhorst, could he scrape together five hundred men who could be implicitly trusted to be honest men, and fulfil the mission they had undertaken! He doubts whether their "robust" Radicalism would stand firm when once the Northampton shoemaker found that the crimson benches of the Gilded Chamber were softer than his own, and yielded to the demoralizing influence of a coronet when it encircled his manly, but unaccustomed brow. If the Democratic mind, like the Scotch mind, is unequal to the perception of a joke, perhaps it can appreciate a compliment—and such a compliment!

It is difficult to determine whether it is Lord Rosebery or Mr. Labouchere who entertains the most flattering opinion of his party and his friends. Is it Lord Rosebery, who declares that he doubts if he could

find five hundred men whom he could trust to behave honestly if they were sent to the Upper House for a particular purpose, and to behave as ordinary honest men, sent to perform a given duty—pledged to perform a specific act—or is it Mr. Labouchere, who says that it would be the easiest matter in the world for him at any time to put his hand upon five hundred of his followers—good, sound, “robust” Radicals! who could be depended upon to take the Parliamentary oath, and then proceed to perjure themselves without wincing, setting to work at once to overthrow what they had just sworn to defend? Both of these gentlemen may be supposed to speak with a long and intimate, and, no doubt, perfectly accurate experience of the character and virtues of a large section of the “Great Liberal Party.”

V.

If we are told to look to the precedent of 1832, we find it is no precedent at all. There is not the slightest similarity between the objects of the creation of peers in 1832 and those, say, in 1895. The King in 1832 consented to the creation of a sufficient number of peerages to enable a measure to be carried for the extension of the Suffrage, and for reforming the Electoral System of the country within Constitutional limits. The measure was perfectly legitimate and Constitutional in itself, and in its fullest scope, and, moreover, the measure was intended by its Parliamentary authors, in perfect loyalty to the Throne, to strengthen and secure every portion alike of the Constitution—not only the Crown itself—by widening the basis of the Constitution, and

placing the Throne on even a firmer foundation than it had ever rested on before. It may be said without exaggeration that it was this threat to use the Royal Prerogative in 1832 which contributed in no small degree to place the Throne in a state of security, so firm that when the revolutionary storm of 1848 shook every throne in Europe, the Monarchy in England was shown to be more firmly rooted than at any previous period of its history—and this barely sixteen years after the critical times of the Reform Agitation. No doubt, when the King consented to exercise his prerogative, it was a violent use of that power. No one doubts that it was so, but nobody doubts also that this prerogative was called into active use for a Constitutional purpose and within perfectly Constitutional limits. But for what purpose will that prerogative be invoked in 1895? It would be exercised for the purpose of carrying a measure which had for its special aim and purpose to destroy—and not to strengthen—the Constitution and the Throne! For that reason—simple but fatal,—the precedent of 1832 completely fails.

VI.

Well, then, it is doubtful how the threatened assault is to be made. But the country is impatient. Ministerial pledges must be fulfilled. The army must advance; the batteries must be opened. What will the Ministers do? Will they propose a Bill as suggested by Lord Rosebery? Very good. The House of Commons proposes a Bill. The House of

Lords rejects it. Or, if the Lords consent to its passing their House, (if such an absurdity could be imagined), it passes that House, and waits for the Royal Assent, and there probably it would wait for a very lengthened period. But to believe that such a Bill would ever reach that stage is absurd. The Peers would never pass a measure for their own deliberate destruction. An attack, therefore, in the shape of a Bill is foredoomed to be unsuccessful. The next move would be the passing of a Resolution by the House of Commons, declaring more or less distinctly, that it is the will of the people, that the House of Peers should cease to exist. Well, let the House of Commons, if it so please, pass a thousand such Resolutions. They are of no value. The House of Lords does not exist by the will of the Lower House. The Commons can no more destroy the House of Lords by a Resolution than they can prevent the sun from rising by a Resolution. A Resolution of the Commons to annihilate the Lords would have as much effect as the Papal Bull against the Comet. The House of Lords exists by the will of the Sovereign alone, and not by the authority of the people, or of any legislative body. It exists by virtue of the issue of Writs of summons from the Sovereign bidding the peers to take their seats and legislate. It is the Sovereign—and the Sovereign alone—who calls the House of Lords into existence. It is the Sovereign alone who possesses the power to issue these Writs of summons. It is he alone who can refuse to issue them. The Sovereign himself, therefore, is the only power in the State who can abolish the House of Lords. It is clear, therefore, that no Bill

and no Resolution could possibly effect, in a Constitutional manner, the object of the revolutionary party. Before resorting to actual force they must try some other method. There remains only one other Constitutional method : The Commons must send an Address to the Sovereign requesting him to cease in future from issuing his Writs of summons to the Peers. An "Address," therefore, with a hint at stopping Supply, is the only remaining Constitutional way by which the Commons can proceed. Such an Address, with such a proposal sent direct to the Throne, over the head of the Upper House, would at once place the Crown in a position of most critical embarrassment towards the Commons, because it would be impossible for any Sovereign to submit to their demands. He would refuse, and in that case a collision between the Commons and the Crown would be as inevitable as death itself.

VII.

If the sequence of events, as I have traced it, is at all accurate, it is clear that this attack on the Lords, so lightly undertaken by so many thousands, so appalling in its consequences, cannot by any possibility be made without embroiling and endangering the safety of the Throne. And it is the key-note of these remarks that, although the struggle against the Peers will be at first regarded as an ordinary political electoral opposition against an ordinary political grievance, it must eventually be extended to the Throne,—that the issue will ultimately be placed in the hands of the Sovereign,—and that round the throne itself will surge the fiercest fury of

the storm, and that hatred of the Lords will soon be merged into anger against the Sovereign for his refusal to surrender to demands which no Sovereign of this Empire could accept. Can we imagine a state of affairs more full of the most perilous responsibility than that in which the Sovereign would be placed by an Address petitioning him to abolish the House of Lords? He must either refuse or accept the democratic proposals. If he accepts, he overthrows the oldest Parliamentary Chamber in the world, and an integral part of what has been for six centuries the constitutional system of England. More than that, he must eventually, by his own hand, destroy the throne he occupies, and on which a long line of Kings has sat before him. He would betray a trust, so solemn, so sacred, that probably there is no other trust in this world more sacred or more solemn, the trust of the traditions of this mighty Monarchy, and the duty to hand down to his successors that crown and his Royal robes without a stain, and to defend his crown, even with life if necessary. He would betray the thousands of loyal subjects who look to him to defend their Institutions to which they are devoted, who look to him as the representative and guardian of a cause which they do not intend shall be attacked with impunity.

If the Sovereign refuses to accept the demands of the Address, it would be childish foolishness to shrink from the avowal that nothing short of a miracle could prevent such a collision between Crown and Commons as would convulse the country from end to end, and attain eventually the dimensions of a Civil war. And

this is what will happen if the electorate approves the policy of the Democratic Ministers who place the abolition of the Lords before it and await their judgment.

VIII.

There is, no doubt, an opinion and belief in the minds of many that whatever changes may be in store for this country will be effected peacefully. It is often asserted that, if the will of the nation upon the organic principles of its form of Government is clearly and distinctly expressed, the country would pass quietly from one form of Government to another, from Monarchy to Democratic Dictatorship, with perfect order, without a conflict. Exit King! enter Democracy! enter Dictator! and not a hand will be raised against them. The Conservative lamb will lie down by the Revolutionary lion. Beyond a little lamb-like bleating, the lamb will make no protest. All will go on just the same as before. All will be happy. The Sovereign, in fear of a conflict, and not wishing to shed the blood of his very patriotic subjects, will either surrender at the first whisper of a stoppage of supply, or will abdicate. The Sovereign indeed would abdicate if he found himself face to face with a single Chamber, without a House of Lords, and after a defeat—he could not do otherwise. But not before!

IX.

But if the situation is to be accepted with pious resignation, and a martyr-like submission, we must be resigned, and prepared for the contempt and ridicule with which all the nations of the earth, who were impartial eye witnesses, would regard this extraordinary exhibi-

tion of national deterioration. What would have become of all those professions of devotion to the throne, and the undying attachment to the Institutions which we have been accustomed to hear shouted from the housetops of every city, every village, every parish in the country, if the great Constitutional Party, as they are fond of styling themselves, tamely abandoned without a murmur the field to their opponents? There would indeed be a wondrous spectacle of a great party admitting that all their professions of loyalty had been hollow empty phrases; and their devotion to their principles a sham and a fraud. Could they, before the eyes of the whole world, be guilty of this desertion? To suppose so would be to admit that the race of Englishmen had deteriorated to a degree and to an extent which even their greatest detractors would scarcely have ventured to assert. To imagine that this change from our present system of Government to one diametrically opposed to it, and which we have always opposed, should pass unchallenged, would be to imagine a display of poltroonery on the part of the Conservative party, with all its combination and bodies, with all its Conservative Associations and Unions, with its "Primrose League," and such like organisations, as would suffice to bury them ignominiously beneath a hurricane of scorn and contempt. What sort of figure would the "Primrose League" cut, with all its paraphernalia of Councillors, Knights, Habitations, and Dames of high degree? And what would have been the good of all this frippery, all those eloquent addresses, all the harangues against democratic principles, which

had been thundered so valorously in so many thousands of Habitations, Habitations blessed with the most dignified names and patronized by the most exalted of Dames? A glorious spectacle it would be to see these valiant Councillors and Knights on their bended knees, grovelling before the enemy they had so often challenged to the death in the safety of their Habitations, and whom they had so heroically threatened with utter extermination behind the petticoats of the "Dames." And now—well, the flag is to be hauled down. But would not the Knights be in rather a sorry plight, and have very rueful countenances? And the Dames? Well, it would not be very odd if they were the laughing stock of their Democratic sisters, who, after their bloodless victory, would be justified in pointing with infinite scorn their fingers at those great Dames who could not manage to get their valiant Knights to screw their courage up to the sticking point, and who had shewn as little of the heroine themselves as their own egregious Knights had shown of the chivalry of those fighting champions "of the faith that was in them" whose titles these modern Paladins had usurped, but without at the same time putting on with their armour their attributes of courage and fidelity. Yet, all this, which sounds an exaggerated jest, and an improbable one, will become an absolute truth, if we are to be, as we are told will be the case, passive and humble spectators of these great political changes! And it is an undoubted fact that thousands entertain the belief that these changes will not be resisted—certainly not by force. It is the commonest everyday

“summing up,” in ordinary conversation, which we hear on all sides, in the usual intercourse of society, “These changes will not come in my time ; and if they do, they will be effected peacefully.” Whether they will come in our time depends on the simple question whether the Liberal Party and their Leaders will stand true to those professions they have made and the pledges they have given to the Democracy, or whether they will think that discretion is the better part of valour, and run away.

On the other hand—if they stand true, these changes, or attempts to enforce these changes, are not very distant. Whether, I repeat, they will be effected peacefully will depend upon whether the Constitutional Party in England is true to its principles, and has the courage and manhood to resist their utter destruction, not only at the polling booths, but to resist it in ways more worthy of their professions, than in heroic vapourings in Primrose League Drawing-rooms.

X.

We will imagine the House of Lords abolished (by some methods at present undeveloped) very peacefully, but very effectually. We now have a Sovereign left face to face with the Single Democratic Chamber. But we will stop for a moment to suppose that a Chamber of “Revision,” as so many believe and hope will be the case, has been created in the stead of the old Chamber, to revise the measures of the Commons, but without the veto. It is possible that a very large amount of public opinion may be enlisted in favour of the Abolition of the House of Lords, by the

belief and hope that if the present House was abolished, another Senate with different powers might be created. Many could be induced to vote under that impression. A Senate—a Chamber of Revision without the right of rejection,—revision, but no veto—would tempt many men to vote for the ending of the House of Lords as it now exists. The bait has been held out by the Leeds Conference, and perhaps many may be caught by it. But it would be an absolute delusion. If men vote for the ending of this House because they believe there will be another Legislative Chamber created (I will call the limitation and alteration of the powers of the Peers a new Chamber for the sake of brevity) they must be under some infatuation which blinds their minds and obscures their intelligence. They must have forgotten that there could be no question of creating a new Senate until the old Chamber, that is to say, its present powers, were out of the way. But they will not be out of the way until the Revolutionary Party have coerced or cajoled the Sovereign into a state of subservience to their demands, and had frightened him into subjection, or had won the day in other fields than the floor of a legislative chamber. In either case, why should the Democrats create another Senate? What is the avowed object of this revolution? It is to free the Lower House from all restraints from any other body, and to allow nothing to exist between the people and their representatives in a Single Chamber. That is the object avowed by every leader of standing in the Democratic party. If the Democratic party are powerful enough to destroy the Upper House, either

by terrifying the Crown or by defeating its armies, and to reduce the Crown either into a complete state of impotence, or to destroy it altogether, why should this party, in the full flush of its victory, having just destroyed the House of Lords, set to work immediately to re-construct on its ruins another Second Chamber,—which must be either strong or it must be weak? If it is to be strong, that is to say, possessed of a power of rejection, which is the life and breath of a Legislative Chamber, why take the trouble to destroy the present Chamber? If it is to be weak, why take the trouble to create it? Would it be worth while? It would indeed be an absurdity to suppose that the Democrats having gained their object by demolishing the legislative body which stood in the way of its absolute authority and “paramount” despotism, would create any Second Chamber, however limited its functions. Would it not be childish inconsistency if they proceeded to re-construct another chamber to stand between them and their supreme power when the object of their revolution had all along been to set up one Democratic Chamber absolutely independent of all control or interference of any power or personage in the State? Why should they stultify themselves and nullify their acts when they had taken the trouble and the rather serious responsibility of overthrowing a Constitution and destroying a Throne to rid themselves of the veriest semblance of control or check. No! Throne and Constitution are to go! One Single Chamber is to be invested with absolute and “paramount” power. How could a Chamber exercise

“paramount” authority if another Chamber had powers of revision? The victory had been gained. Why should they throw away the most precious fruits of the victory and again place their necks under the very yoke they had just thrown off? It would be absurd to believe it. It will be obvious at once that such a Chamber of Revision is not what the Democrats have asked and fought for, nor could they be expected to be satisfied with it if they had just been successful in overturning the old Chamber. The Democrats, as the attacking party, asked for a “paramount” Chamber, and nothing less—without any other Chamber whatever, whether of revision or otherwise, whether hereditary or otherwise—standing between them and the people. That this was their object was clearly formulated at the Portsmouth meeting of the representatives of the National Liberal Association, and adopted, with solemn pledges by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, speaking in the name of the Ministry—and adopted by the acknowledged leaders of the Democratic Party and their followers. On this point there can, fortunately, be no doubt. But supposing for an instant that the Moderates are sufficiently strong to obtain some kind of a Second Chamber, it would obviously be but a shadow of legislative power; and the semblance of control, in revising the measures proposed by the Commons, would be unsubstantial and ridiculous. It would have no practical power over any measures the Commons might think fit to send to them, because the moment their powers of revision were used to any practical effect, they would be snuffed out with little ceremony

by the "paramount Chamber," and the show and pretence of any control would be put aside as soon as there was the slightest symptom of their becoming a reality. As under no circumstances would this Chamber of "Revision" possess the veto, this mode of ending the Lords would simply be a vexatious and irritating mode of prolonging the emasculated existence of a moribund Second Chamber in a purely comatose state; in order to soothe the feelings and gain the votes of the moderate section of the Liberal Party. But for how long would a democratic Commons tolerate such a vexatious—as well as ludicrous—interference with their absolute supremacy in legislative matters? At the very best it would only be a Chamber to register the edicts of the Lower House, for they would have no power of "rejection"—no veto. A wretched spectacle of legislative impotence! Such a Chamber would probably die after a very short and by no means glorious career. Whatever might be the cause of its end, it is not at all dangerous to assume that its end would be certain—and the life short.

XI.

We find ourselves now the happy citizens of a Country with a Sovereign trying to exist with an Assembly aspiring to Sovereign powers and a "paramount authority" in the State. We are in this enviable position: A Sovereign, and a Chamber "paramount" over the Sovereign, are our Constitution. How long would that union last? Why, the first act of the single Chamber would be—judging from the only

precedents we have—to declare its supreme authority over the Crown and every other body—and to define what it meant by “paramount authority!” Such a definition would naturally comprise the absorption into the hands of the one Chamber all the powers and privileges and prerogatives which had hitherto been possessed by the Crown as the political Head of the State. We will see what those dignities and royal prerogatives amount to. “To give or refuse to Bills the ‘Royal Assent,’ to cause the due administration and execution of the laws; to act on behalf of the whole community in its intercourse with Foreign States, and as a part of that, to declare war or conclude peace; to direct the naval and military force of the country; to administer the public revenue; to prorogue or dissolve Parliament; to create peers; and to coin money. The monarch is the supreme power of the Church; the source of justice and of mercy, of all offices, honours, emoluments, and chartered rights.”* Would it be reasonable to suppose that a triumphant Democracy, determined to usurp “paramount” authority, would leave one shred of these powers, not only political but personal, in the hands of Royalty? If the Democratic idea of asserting its superiority, and arrogating to itself supreme power, is carried to its logical fulfilment, not one of the above attributes would be left in the hands of the Sovereign. It may be true that some of these attributes of Royalty are nominal and unreal, and have only a fictitious importance. But many of these attributes are very real, and even now have not lost

* See authorities *passim*.

their power, though limited by influences and certain boundaries, which are perfectly well understood and recognized. The headship of the Church, the headship of the Army, the power of selecting Ministries, the power to dissolve Parliament, are by no means fictions of power, they are the existing prerogatives of the Sovereign, and are real and living. In the present reign the headship of the Church has been by no means unasserted. The Royal prerogative was used, and violently used, to carry the Abolition of Purchase in the Army over the usual Parliamentary forms of procedure, and to overrule the opposition of the Peers. Even the Veto, the strongest legislative weapon in the Royal Armoury, is not dead. It may be dormant, but the Veto exists. It may have rusted for years in its scabbard—but it is there—the steel is as true and good as ever. But if the democracy assumes the virtual sovereignty of the Empire by constituting itself the “paramount” despotism in a single assembly—it would abolish these prerogatives altogether from the Crown and would take them to themselves, and it is at once obvious that the Chamber cannot possess “paramount” power unless the powers of the Crown had ceased to exist.

XII.

How would a Sovereign possibly exist under such anomalous circumstances? It would be impossible. If all these appendages of state, whether real or nominal, political or social, are torn from the person of the sovereign, and he is left to become a mere powerless

puppet, without a vestige of the royal prerogatives or of the political splendour of kingship ; could any sovereign continue to occupy a position so degraded in contrast to its old glorious magnificence ? There is not a pauper between the Four Seas, who, under such conditions, would care to sit upon what was once the proudest throne in the world. What would the Sovereign do ? There might be a very tempting course open to him—abdication. And what an abdication ! Not a noble one by any means, or one which would inspire the least sympathy for the person of the monarch in his fallen fortunes. He individually would richly deserve every misfortune that could befall a man ! For it must be remembered, that if he found himself in that predicament, it would be the consequence of his own cowardice in yielding to the threats of a rebellious parliament and in tamely surrendering the House of Lords as a victim to the Democracy. If the Throne had been abolished it was through his own act, and here was the Nemesis for his cowardice ! A sovereign discredited in the eyes of his nation ; a traitor to his oaths ; to his country ; to his dynasty ; stripped of his power without a murmur ; robbed of his kingly robes and sceptre without a struggle ; a coward and a traitor. He would abdicate, and who would pity him ? He would leave a throne he had dishonoured, accompanied by the jeers and ridicule of the world. But more than this. Not only would the political system, but the whole social system of the English community be shattered by the degradation and disappearance of the Sovereign's influence, which it felt through all the ramifications of English society. If

the head of society were shorn of his kingly attributes and dignities how long would he remain at the head of that society? A fallen and discredited monarch would never hold the first position in English society. Nor would it be good for the nation that he should do so. The influence, therefore, of a Court, so far-reaching, so inestimably valuable, when the example is of a high and noble standard, would cease, and the results would be a very perceptible deterioration in all those qualities which during the earlier portion of Queen Victoria's reign made English Society far superior to the Society of preceding reigns. In fact, what is usually termed Society, would fall to pieces without the guiding light and leading of a respected sovereign. Society, under the new era, might possibly establish an improved social code of manners and customs, and the civilization of a new type, and of many fresh ideas, but it is doubtful if it would be—even framed on democratic models and judged by democratic standard—equal to the society of the more refined and cultured period of Queen Victoria's reign. We see therefore how irreparable would be the injury inflicted on the social as well as political interests of the nation by the Sovereign if he deserted his colours, and then abdicated! But then we are told all this will be effected peacefully. Will it be so?

XIII.

Let us first of all try to realize to ourselves what it is we are going to exchange so quietly for a democratic system.

This is not the moment to introduce an academic

disquisition into the merits of the Assembly which the Sovereign is now to be asked to demolish, but let one of the greatest of England's statesmen speak from the grave and remind us what it is we are going to surrender. What are the words of Sir Robert Peel? He says:

"I avow to you that I mean to support in its full integrity the authority of the House of Lords as an essential, indispensable condition of the continued existence of the mixed form of government under which we live—as tantamount, in short, to the maintenance of the British Constitution. . . . I ask you, then, to unite in defence of the House of Lords. I do not invite you to form this resolution by a mere appeal to hereditary prejudice and affection without reference to reason. It might have been enough, in other times, to allege 'This is the Constitution under which we live; this is the Constitution we inherit from our forefathers, and wish to hand down to our posterity. The condition of the society in which we live will bear a contrast with that of any other country of the world, by whatever form of government it may be regulated, and we will stand on the old ways of the Constitution, and prefer practical substantial happiness to such visionary projects of improvement as affect the foundations of our government.' . . . This might have sufficed in other times, but now it would be neither safe nor wise to shrink from the appeal to reason; not safe—for prescriptive authority will be rejected; not wise—for you may without danger submit to the test of argument.

"It is said that the privileges of the House of Lords are hereditary. Why, from the nature of the functions which the House of Lords have to discharge, it is because its privileges are hereditary that they are valuable. It is this which gives the institution that stability which it would not have if it were subservient unto, and immediately controllable by, the will of the people. The objection of hereditary privilege may be good if you prefer pure democracy to that mixed form of government under which we live; but if you wish to maintain a mixed form of govern-

ment and an hereditary Monarchy, it would be madness to relinquish the hereditary privilege of the House of Lords. . . . And when, on such arguments as those by which it is proposed to destroy this hereditary privilege, that destruction shall have taken place—when for such profound reasons as that because men are not hereditary tailors, nor hereditary carpenters, therefore that there ought not to be hereditary peers—when for such arguments as these you have abolished the House of Peers, how long do you think the privilege of hereditary Monarchy will survive? I will tell you—just so long as the privileges and prerogatives of Monarchy can be made useful instruments and tools in the hands of the democracy which is to ride triumphant over the ruins of the House of Lords.

“The peers, it is said, are not responsible. I have heard that before. I replied that the peers were not responsible in the same sense in which the House of Commons were responsible, but that in their responsibility to God, to their conscience, and to enlightened public opinion, the public had a guarantee for the faithful performance of their duties. Now, if it is a vital objection to the House of Peers that they are not directly and immediately responsible to the whole mass of the people, let me ask whether there be not other political bodies invested with high privileges which are in the same sense irresponsible also. The House of Commons certainly is responsible to their constituents; the Ministry is responsible to the Parliament; but to whom is the constituent body responsible? You have selected a certain class from the whole of the people. You have qualified them for the exercise of great powers. You have invested (them) with great political privileges and franchises, and I ask to whom are they responsible? They are not selected for any peculiar qualification. You can administer no test by which the fitness of a man to exercise the elective franchise may be determined. Does the right accrue from any merit of the holder, from superior education, or any education at all? No; it is inherited in one half of the cases. One half of the whole privilege has the fatal defect of being hereditary, and, as to the other half, any man, whether he can read or not, may

acquire and exercise it, if he rents a house of sufficient value. Here, then, is a privileged political body. And what one security have you for the faithful and honest exercise of its powers and discharge of its functions beyond that which exists in the case of the House of Lords? To whom is the constituent body responsible? Is there any responsibility of any conceivable kind,—responsibility to God, to their consciences, and to an intelligent deliberate public opinion? Public opinion!—a powerful check, no doubt. But this check is not to exist for the constituent body. They are to vote by ballot. They are to exercise their high trust in secret. No responsibility for them whatever—nay more, no knowledge of what they do, or how they exercise their power. Will this great country, will those who have not the franchise, ever tolerate such a state of things? We are to relinquish the controlling check of the House of Peers—we are to constitute one overruling, privileged, democratic body, and to trust it with an authority, not only unlimited, not only irresponsible, but secret and unseen. No, never will such a tyranny be borne!

“But then, it is said—and, this being the main point, let us consider it fairly—it is said that the House of Lords has shown a spirit at variance with that of the people, and has obstructed the march of social improvement. I challenge the opponents of the House of Lords to the proof of that fact. . . . I ask you, can it be said with the shadow of truth that the progress of improvement has been suspended? The House of Lords, in respect of some of the measures I have mentioned, has originated them. In others they anticipated and acted in advance of public opinion. In respect to some (reform of the House of Commons, for instance) they felt a strong and almost insuperable objection, and resisted to the last. They yielded—reluctantly yielded, I admit—when the current of public opinion could not be mistaken and was too strong to be opposed. But where is the ground for impeachment of the House of Lords in all this? What better proof could be adduced of the discretion and wisdom with which the Lords have exercised the functions which the Constitution designed them to perform?”

XIV.

If Sir Robert Peel had lived to this day, he would have found his convictions still further strengthened. Not many months ago he would have seen a Bill for the creation of a Separate Legislature for Ireland—a Bill aiming at the Legislative Dissolution of the Union between the two Countries—a Bill of vital importance—carried through the Commons by a minority of English votes added to a number of Irish votes sufficient to turn an English minority into a Parliamentary majority. It was clear that English opinion, through the majority of English representatives, was adverse to the measure. But it passed the Commons. It would have become then the law of the land if there had been only one single Chamber, and if the Lords had not been truer interpreters of English opinion than the House of Commons, and, by destroying the Bill, proved the inestimable value of the veto entrusted to that House, which it is now proposed to destroy in defiance of the proof of its value just presented to the eyes and intelligence of the whole world. But Sir Robert Peel would also have seen in 1886 an ample proof of the wish of the Peers to move in harmony with the times and the increased requirements of the age; in their acquiescence with the Franchise Bill. I say nothing of the Reform Bill of 1867 because it was a Bill brought in by the Conservative Administration, and consequently, Liberals would attach no importance to the passing of that measure through the Lords, because they would say that, whether it was a reactionary or a revolutionary measure, it would be all the same to the Peers because it was the production of a Conservative Cabinet.

So I will pass by that Act, and quote the Franchise Act of 1885, because that measure was a Bill brought in by a Liberal Government. This Franchise Bill of 1885 was an advance to meet the extension of popular demands which would have startled Sir Robert Peel in 1832, and if he could have foreseen in 1832 that such a Bill would pass the Lords practically unopposed in 1885, he would have doubted the evidence of his own senses. We are told that the Lords have no sympathy with popular requirements and that every great measure for the people's advancement is opposed and thwarted by the infamous Peers! What happened in 1885? The Conservative Party in the most Conservative Chamber, agreed to a Bill of Franchise for the most advanced extension of the suffrage which had ever been made, far beyond what the Liberal Party had ever before dared or ventured to propose. The same party, which had brought the country to the verge of civil war in 1832 to oppose a measure which transferred the political power of the country from the Upper Classes to the great Middle Class, were themselves, in 1885, as well as in 1867, the supporters of measures for transferring that power from the Middle Class to the Lower! What did the Conservative Lords do? How did they receive both those measures? Not as in 1832 by opposition, almost to the verge of Civil war, but practically without party opposition. In fact, whatever opposition there was to the Bill of 1885, was not directed against the principle or policy of the measure itself, but simply against the measure being pressed upon the country before the question of redistribution of seats had

been dealt with and settled. When we are told that, with unvarying obstinacy, the Lords are the natural opponents of everything that is asked for by the people, it is only necessary to ask whether it is possible to point out one single measure of primary importance affecting the people's interests, and welfare, which has been destroyed or permanently rejected by the Lords. 'As a matter of historical truth there is absolutely not one single instance of any permanent rejection, in modern Parliamentary history, of any Bill of the first importance sent up by the Commons. It is a simple truth to say that every great measure—Roman Catholic emancipation, Reform Bills, extension of the suffrage, repeal of the Navigation Laws, removal of all civil and religious disabilities, Repeal of the Corn Laws, is now on the Statute Book of England by the act of the House of Lords as well as by the act of the Commons. And the Nonconformist body, who constitute the bulk of the Liberal Party, might, in fairness, remember that the opening of the burial grounds, one of their greatest grievances, was owing far more to the Lords than the Commons. However that may be—we may ask, in reference to the Acts of Parliament which the Commons claim as their own, why are the Commons to arrogate to themselves the whole credit of passing laws, when the Lords had the same Constitutional share in passing them as the Commons? And they have, of course, the same right to claim the whole credit of passing them as the Commons—neither more nor less. Although many of these measures were opposed and delayed by the Lords, not one of them was

definitely destroyed, and the delay in passing them was strictly in accordance with the exercise of those functions, and that 'veto,' which in the case of the Home Rule Bill has met with the general approbation and gratitude of the majority of English opinion, while in 1886 we saw an instance of deference to popular opinion and sympathy with popular wants, which at once deals a death blow at the charge of a want of sympathy and harmony with the people. How can it be said, with fairness, that the Lords, who have jointly and with co-ordinate authority, with the Commons, agreed to—or (if it so please the Whigs) have given way to all these Liberal measures, are nothing else but a Conservative Chamber existing to pass Conservative measures and to throw out every measure which would be beneficial to the people? If it is said that the enormous majority in the Lords against the Home Rule Bill, a majority of something like ten to one, was an instance of it, it must be remembered that the Home Rule Bill was not a measure which affected the popular welfare, at any rate of England, in the remotest manner, and also that the majority was composed of many Liberals—many Whigs—who are still true to true Liberalism, and who, if true Liberalism was only in question would show themselves once again as Liberals and Whigs as earnest, and faithful to Whig principles, as their fathers had been. It is certainly a very hard thing, but very characteristic of the party which makes the charge, that the Lords should be blamed for being a Conservative Chamber, because of the largeness of its majorities against such Bills as the Home Rule for Ireland, when the majorities are composed

of as many Liberals as Conservatives. Is it fair to call a Legislative Chamber a purely Conservative Chamber when the majorities on Constitutional questions are, in a very large proportion, composed of Liberals who, in all the essential points of Liberalism, are as good, as honest—perhaps far more honest—and faithful Liberals, than the revolutionary Liberals who figure in the Democratic minorities of that Chamber?

XV.

We might even carry the war into the enemy's camp, and ask, why should not the Democrats blame themselves,—and with far more justice; for these majorities? Are they not their own doing—the result of their own policy during the last ten years? It is an incontestable fact that the Conservative majorities, which have made the House of Lords a purely Conservative Assembly (if indeed it is one), are the gifts of Mr. Gladstone and his extreme followers and successors. It is Mr. Gladstone's policy which has destroyed the Liberal party in the Lords—and put an end to anything approaching an even balance between the two parties. Extremes beget extremes,—and, if the House of Lords is now an extreme Conservative Chamber, it is owing to the extreme policy of the Democratic Party. The preponderance of Conservative majorities in this House is as much the creation of Mr. Gladstone himself as of Lord Salisbury. This would not matter to Mr. Gladstone if the House of Lords is really eventually to be swept from the face of the earth. But suppose the attack to fail! Suppose the Upper House does weather the storm!—and it has not yet fallen—it would be difficult to imagine a more

ludicrous position than that in which the Democrats would be placed, because, in the case of the survival of the Peers, the policy of Mr. Gladstone would not only not have destroyed the Peers themselves, but have strengthened the Conservative party in their House, and would have made the Conservative party predominant. Mr. Gladstone would have the satisfaction, which, we are sure, would be a most delightful and novel feeling to him, of recognizing that no Conservative statesman had ever done so much to give the Conservatives in the Lords such supremacy over the Liberal party, as he had himself, by driving all the moderate Liberals out of his own ranks into the arms of his Conservative enemies. And to no purpose! If the Lords survive the struggle,—and the struggle will be a very bitter,—very long,—and very doubtful—one!—Mr. Gladstone will have to feed, in his venerable leisure, upon the reflection that, much against his own grain, he has proved a very Balaam to his party. He has cursed his friends and blessed his foes. He has doubled or trebled the Conservative majority in the Peers. He has given them a distinct supremacy by breaking up his own party, and reducing it to a mere group from its position as a great Parliamentary party in one of the two Chambers of Parliament. But then,—as we know perfectly well,—Mr. Gladstone would smile at this sort of Conservative gratitude and its complacent congratulations, and would answer them by pointing his warning finger to the coming future. No doubt, Mr. Gladstone counts on this same overwhelming supremacy as being a most fatal gift to the

Tories—a very Trojan horse within their walls to carry perdition in its frame to the citizens,—and as being the very best arrow in his quiver to smite his foe. Mr. Gladstone would say, “By all means take my gifts—“if you like to call them so—and see what they will bring you. Wait a little! and see where your Conservative majorities, of which I wish you joy, will land you!” “*Rira bien qui rira le dernier.*” He laughs best who laughs last, will be Mr. Gladstone’s answer. It is, of course, true,—it is obvious,—that Mr. Gladstone relies upon this overwhelming Conservatism, however brought about, as the lever by which he, or his successors, when the time for action comes, will raise popular passion against the Lords. They will ask the people to overthrow the Upper House, on the ground that this supremacy of Conservative voting power is intolerable,—that it is the last rag clinging to the tatters of the musty garments of a moth-eaten Toryism,—that it is unsuited to the wants of these advanced and enlightened days,—and that the People’s voice cannot be heard while it is smothered by the majorities of the Chamber which is now in the hands of a Conservative despotism, and exists alone for the purpose of preventing the passing of all Liberal,—or what Liberals call Liberal legislation, such as, for instance, the Bill for Home Rule in Ireland, and the dismemberment of the Empire. In a word, Mr. Gladstone says: “Grant that your majorities are created by my policy, and are my doing, you think—infatuated beings!—they are benefits,—You will find them your condemnation,—your ruin,—your destruction.—If I have made them myself, as you say I have,

"I have made them, not to be your salvation, but to
 "be a scourge wherewith to scourge your august
 "assembly. You will find my gift to be the goblet which
 "contains the poison, which is now, so it seems, pleasing
 "to your eye, but which, in due time, will paralyze your
 "body and dissolve your frame into thin air." Very
 good. But to speak more seriously, if Mr. Gladstone
 is successful, well and good. But what if he
 and his party fail? Victory is always uncertain.
 What if the Lords survive the coming conflict, and
 if the close of the struggle leaves the Lords as they
 are now? And it may be so. Could a more disastrous
 failure of statesmanship be conceived than that which
 the policy of Mr. Gladstone would have incurred if it
 were found at the end of the conflict, that the Lords were
 in existence, and the Conservatives were still the pre-
 dominant party, through his own policy, and his own
 acts? And it is on the cards. If the Lords do
 survive, Mr. Gladstone's and Mr. Morley's calculations
 will have so ruinously miscarried, that Democratic
 statesmanship will receive a blow, both in the Upper
 House and in the country, from which it would take
 generations to recover. And it is the perception,
 that there is a chance of the Lords being the victors
 and Mr. Gladstone and the Democrats defeated, which
 sheds a strong light upon the vastness of the vital issues
 on which Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery have
 thrown down the gage of battle, the immeasurable
 greatness of the stake, the impossibility of conciliation
 or compromise between the two parties, and con-
 sequently the dangerous probability of Civil war.

If, in one sense, the majorities so overwhelming are gratifying to the victor, and good for the party whose opinions they represent, it is very doubtful whether such very great majorities are, on many grounds, equally gratifying to the leaders who lead them in the Legislative House. Majorities, so overwhelming, are by no means unmixed blessings. Majorities of ten to one are sometimes as undesirable as very small ones. The very largeness is a defect. Party Government is not benefitted by over-matched minorities, and the wisest best-wisher for good Government would prefer smaller majorities and more equally proportioned party victories.

XVI.

I am anxious to show to those who think that this movement may subside and be no more heard of, that the Ministers of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Party are too far pledged to withdraw from the conflict. There is no case in Parliamentary history of a question adopted by a great political party, adopted by all the chiefs of that party, involving great principles and objects, being withdrawn, not even after a defeat, certainly not without a struggle. It is true that Home Rule has disappeared for the moment, but it is far too soon to quote that Bill as a precedent, and say that it will not come again to the front of political questions. Speaking from precedents, we have a right to assume that this question will not be unlike other great state questions, which have gone before. Let us see how far the Ministers and ex-Ministers of the Queen have pledged themselves, their party, and their country

to this particular question. I will show how they are pledged to the hilt to advance. We give Mr. Gladstone the pride of place. What does he tell us, at a moment when, if ever there should be in a statesman's breast a feeling of responsibility heavier than before, a solemnity of utterance befitting the occasion, when he was leaving his political legacy to the nation, and bequeathing with all the authority of an experience of fifty years in the front rank of English statesmen, this legacy? He says:—

“I must observe that the sacrifice of the Bill forms part of a most serious question—a question which has long been serious, which, I am sorry to say, has grown more and more serious with the lapse of time, and which, during the present Session, has arrived at a stage of peculiar acuteness and peculiar magnitude. We look, therefore, Sir, at the question of the acceptance of these amendments as part of a whole. We look at the acceptance of them not as closing a controversy, but as part of a controversy, which, according to our judgment, it will be the duty of Parliament to continue until it has arrived at a satisfactory settlement. Now we have come, as I have said, to a more acute stage. The question is whether the judgment of the House of Lords is not merely to modify but is to annihilate the whole work of the House of Commons—work which has been performed at an amount and sacrifice of time, labour, and convenience totally unprecedented. Well, Sir, we have not been anxious—I believe I speak for my colleagues—I know I speak my own convictions—we have not been desirous to precipitate or unduly to accentuate a crisis. We have been desirous to save something from the wreck of the Session's work. (Cheers.) We feel that this Bill is a Bill of such value that upon the whole, great as we admit the objections to be to the acceptance of these amendments, the objections are still greater and weightier to a course which would lead to the rejection of the Bill. We are compelled to accompany that acceptance with the sorrowful de-

claration that the differences, not of a temporary or casual nature merely, but differences of conviction, differences of prepossession, differences of fundamental tendency between the House of Lords and the House of Commons, appear to have reached a development in the present year such as to create a state of things of which we are compelled to say that, in our judgment, it cannot continue. (Loud and continued cheers.) Sir, I do not wish to use hard words which are easily employed and as easily retorted. It is a game that two can play at—but without using hard words, without presuming to judge of motives, without desiring or venturing to allege imputations, I have felt it a duty to state what appear to me to be indisputable facts. The issue which is raised between a deliberative Assembly elected by the votes of more than six millions of people, and a deliberative Assembly occupied by many men of virtue, by many men of talent, of course with considerable diversities and varieties, is a controversy which, when once raised, must go forward to an issue. (Loud cheers.) The issue has been postponed, long postponed, I rejoice to say. It has been postponed in many cases to a considerable degree by that discretion, circumspection, and reserve in the use of enormous privileges which the House of Lords on various occasions in my recollection, in the time of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Aberdeen and other periods, have shown. But I am afraid, Sir, that the epoch, the age of that reserve and circumspection may have gone by. I will not abandon all hope of it, but I must say of the present, I do not like to say that the situation is intolerable, because that is a hard and may seem a dictatorial word; but I think hon. gentlemen opposite must feel as I feel that in some way or other a solution will have to be found for this tremendous contrariety and incessant conflict upon matters of high principle and profound importance between the representatives of the people and those who fill a nominated Chamber. (Cheers.) It is not with the House of Commons to pronounce a judgment on this subject. The House of Commons is itself a party in the case. I have no difficulty in pronouncing on behalf of the Ministry in the issues that have been raised

throughout this year between the two Houses. We take frankly, fully, and finally the side of the House of Commons. (Loud cheers.) The House of Commons could not be a final judge in its own case, and I am by no means anxious to precipitate proceedings of that kind, however they may be invited by an impatience most natural in the circumstances of the case. No doubt, Sir, there is a higher authority than the House of Commons. (Cheers and counter-cheers.) It is the authority of the nation (renewed cheers) which must in the last resort decide. (An hon. member,—“At once,” and cheers.) Happily, we know that we all of us are sufficiently trained in the habits of constitutional freedom to regard that issue as absolutely final upon one and upon all alike of every one of these subjects. The time when that judgment is to be invited, and the circumstances under which it is to be invited, of course, constitute a question of the gravest character and one which the Executive Government of the day can alone consider and decide. My duty terminates by calling the attention of the House to the fact, which it is really impossible to set aside, that in considering these amendments, limited as their scope may seem to some to be, we are considering a part, an essential and inseparable part, of a question enormously large, a question which has become profoundly acute, which will demand a settlement and must receive at an early date that settlement from the highest authority. (Cheers.)”

XVII.

While we read this speech we are struck with the remarkable fact that, while Mr. Gladstone is very emphatic and clear in declaring his views and hostile animosity to the Lords, he gives no intimation whatever as to the methods by which his policy of destruction could be consummated. If it be a remarkable fact that, although all the Liberal Statesmen and Ministers have declared themselves prepared to destroy the Upper House, not one of them has ever had the courage to tell

us how he would destroy it, yet it is a still more strange and significant omission on the part of Mr. Gladstone. There is, usually, no statesman living more courageous than Mr. Gladstone in carrying his convictions into execution, and he certainly, as a rule, never flinches from telling the methods by which he proposes to do so. It must, therefore, be some over-mastering reason and influence on this occasion which would compel him to conceal the methods by which he proposed to give effect to his bitter intentions against the Upper House. What his real reason is must, of course, remain a mere conjecture—but some may doubt if they would be far wrong if they thought that Mr. Gladstone hesitated to declare his method, by which alone his policy could be successfully carried out, because he shrank, with one of those “touches of nature which make the whole world kin,” from embittering the declining years of the Sovereign he had served so long, by unveiling to her the dark storm coming which would cloud the sunset of her glorious life. He would feel (they would say), and he would shrink from the thought probably, that he would have to tell his Royal Mistress that the legacy he had to leave to his country was to shatter the House of Lords—and, as an inevitable consequence, the throne of the Sovereign he had so often sworn to defend. If this is the reason for the omission of details by Mr. Gladstone, what could be more significant? Mr. Gladstone is the most gifted orator of his century. His eloquence has been for half a century the admiration of the cultured world. But never has this gifted statesman, even in his loftiest flights of oratory,

been so eloquent as he is now in his silence. Minds, however, less sentimental and more cynical, would, perhaps, with a truer appreciation of realities, attribute the silence of the great Statesman to other and less worthy causes. They might be so far iconoclastic as to think that Mr. Gladstone was like Canning's "needy knife-grinder"—and had "no story to tell,"—at any rate, that he chose to tell. And some, still more illnatedured, might suspect that, after having summoned the fortress to surrender, Mr. Gladstone preferred to leave it to others to carry on the siege—and that, finding the walls of his Jericho did not crumble into dust at the first blast of his trumpets, is now quite willing to leave it to his successors to burn their fingers as much as they please in the flames he had himself lighted, and which he now could watch in safety at a distance. Time alone—and not a very distant time—can discover which is the truest explanation of Mr. Gladstone's unwonted silence.

XVIII.

Mr. Gladstone is still alive—we are all glad such is the case—and I will treat him as still the living leader of the Democratic Party. But what a position it is that Mr. Gladstone now holds. He is on the horns of a dilemma—or rather a trilemma. Either the attack on the Lords will, to use a common expression, "fizzle out" before it reaches the Lords, or it will be made,—and fail—Or it will be made—and succeed. If it "fizzles out" Mr. Gladstone will have staked his reputation upon a worthless—rotten cause,—and lost it. Or if it is made—and fails—he will have to drain to the bitterest dregs

the cup of humiliation ; and realize what Byron called "the Hell of failure." If it is made—and succeeds—Mr. Gladstone, beyond all other men, will be most responsible for the serious events which will follow. A pleasant set of alternatives !

XIX.

We now pass on to Mr. Gladstone's successor. If Mr. Gladstone was silent as to his methods of operation not so is Lord Rosebery. Lord Rosebery has no scruples in that respect, and is restrained by no influences, political or personal, and he tells us at once what Mr. Gladstone did not venture to declare—that the Lords can only be abolished by force and that he, Lord Rosebery, is prepared to resort to force if the electorate will support him.

He says in his speech at Edinburgh, March 19th :—

"In the one case we have the two Chambers under a Liberal Government ; under a Conservative Government we have a single Chamber. Therefore I say that we are face to face with a great difficulty, a great danger, a great peril to the State. When I first began to agitate this question we were, perhaps, a third of the House of Lords. Since then by frequent creation and frequent conversion (laughter) we are reduced to a tenth of the whole number, and not I think always a tenth. But is it possible to believe that in these days, with the democratic suffrage that we have established, that a House of Commons, elected by the democratic suffrage, will suffer itself to be constantly thwarted, hindered, and harassed by the action of an hereditary Chamber (cheers), in which the proportion of Tories to Liberals is no less than ten to one? We are told that heroic measures may be recommended. We were, in fact, face to face with that last week in the House of Commons, when a resolution, not, I think, conceived in a very

serious or practical spirit (laughter), was carried on this very question. But it was carried by a majority of two (laughter and cheers), and what I deduce from that circumstance, as to which one hardly knows whether to laugh or to cry (laughter), is that there was no feeling contained in the majority against the present Government; quite the reverse. How strong then must be the feeling against the House of Lords that could make so many Liberals put the Government into a minority. Gentlemen, I say that that is a great danger to the State. I have been talking of remedies for many years past, constitutional remedies, remedies within the four walls of the Constitution. I have not been able to find them, for the simple reason that a Bill to be legal, whether as modifying or as going further with the House of Lords, must be passed through both houses of Parliament before it constitutionally becomes law. But I leave that subject to your serious consideration. If it is to be dealt with by the present Government it can only be dealt with with the backing, and on the summons, and on the inspiration of a great popular feeling. (Cheers.) Without that backing, without that inspiration, and without that summons we in this matter are absolutely impotent. (Cheers.) We await your guidance and your direction ("You shall have it"), and when we have it we shall be prepared to take what measures you may inspire."

XX.

Observe in the first place that the Prime Minister believes that "It is impossible in these days with a Democratic Suffrage that a House of Commons will suffer "itself to be constantly thwarted, hindered, and harassed "by the action of an hereditary Chamber." What does this mean, but that the present House of Lords cannot exist with a House of Commons, with a Democratic Suffrage? This was at Edinburgh—but at Birmingham, Lord Rosebery went further and made an admission of exceeding gravity which must be read in conjunction with

his Edinburgh pledges. He said, "I have never met a reasonable man who could tell me of a Constitutional Measure by which we could put an end to the House of Lords." But only a moment before Lord Rosebery had himself, "as a reasonable man," propounded at Birmingham a "Constitutional measure (as he thought) for ending the House of Lords," when he stated dogmatically that "a Bill passed by the two Houses conjointly will put an end to one branch of the Legislature." How Lord Rosebery can reconcile these marvellous inconsistencies and contradictions does not concern us, — but his own party. At Edinburgh he is undeterred by any obstacle, and without the fear of Constitutional restraints or penalties, he boldly declares "If this subject (the destruction of the House of Lords) is to be dealt with, it can only be dealt with on the summons and inspiration of a great people. We await your guidance, and your direction, and when we hear it (a remarkable pledge!), we shall be prepared to take what measures you may inspire." We will be your slaves, and do your bidding! We will do, not what we think best as loyal Ministers of the Queen, but as your humble servants, whatever you, our revolutionary masters, may be good enough to inspire.

Lord Rosebery says, in language perfectly unmistakable, "I find I cannot abolish the Lords by constitutional means. It can only be done by unconstitutional means—that is the only way—and if you give us your inspiration and guidance I will do by unconstitutional means what I have found is impossible to do by constitu-

tional means." Now what can "unconstitutional" means be but force? If his words do not mean that they are simply meaningless. Force, simple unadulterated force—that is the language of the Prime Minister of England! If this is not inciting the masses to violence, what is it? It sounds very like high treason. We are often told that these fiery harangues are empty nothings, and that those who attach some sort of importance to them, are making political mountains out of political molehills. Are we doing so?—or are we not trying to deal seriously with matters that are serious—instead of treating them with ill-timed levity? No one contests for a moment that there are many who, in all sincerity of mind, believe that Lord Rosebery's threats are stage-thunder,—and nothing more. They hold a sincere conviction that, if he had the will, he has not the master-mind, the intellectual strength, to destroy a Constitution. They ridicule the notion that he has either the power or the will to do so. They feel quite happy and contented in the thought that the best and only wise way to treat these irrational "faddists," these "mannikin" revolutionists, is with contemptuous ridicule. They are satisfied that Lord Rosebery, in trying to pose as the leader of a Revolution, in which his own order, to which he owes whatever success he has obtained in his social and political career, would be destroyed, is simply masquerading in a garb which, if he has donned it seriously, is curiously unfitted to him. They profess utter disbelief both in his power and his sincerity. They are moved to much laughter when they pretend that to see this statesman struggling with all his puny strength to

draw a sword from its scabbard, which it would take a giant's strength to draw and to wield, is, to their minds, to see nothing but a ludicrous and side-splitting exhibition; and these irreverend scoffers go further (much further it would be impossible to go), and, with an audacity which almost savours of profanity, assert their unshakeable conviction that the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he threatens to exterminate the Peers is very little better than what the French would call a "*Cromwell du Cirque à cinq sous!*" If these sections of political thought choose to deal lightly with the events of the moment, they are, at any rate, however deluded, perfectly consistent and honest in their course; but what excuse,—what palliation can there be for trifling on the part of the leaders of what promises to be the greatest upheaval of political and social forces since the days of Charles the First. It is trifling with the patience of every intelligent class of politicians, to tell us that Lord Rosebery's words are not to be taken literally and seriously, that Mr. Labouchere is a mere political farceur and charlatan, not worthy of attention, and that all these leaders are speaking, to use a phrase more common than refined—with their tongues in their cheeks. It is time to have done with this trifling, and to tell these leaders that there are thousands of earnest men in both political parties, who are determined to take them at their word and to keep them to their utterances. If the leaders of the Democratic Party are laughing in their sleeves at their Democratic followers, they will find the Democratic masses are in earnest, and, if they try to fool them by leading them

into very dangerous paths for electioneering objects, without any intention to do anything but land them in a ditch when they have served their purpose and when it suits them to throw them over and leave them to their own devices to get out of the ditch as well as they can, they will probably find that the democratic masses will teach them a lesson they will remember that they cannot trifle with such political edged tools as the aspirations and ambitions of a large Revolutionary party. Are we to treat the Prime Minister's utterances when he threatens the Crown, as the babbling of a school-boy? Are the harangues of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he condemns the House of Lords to death, to be treated as the cries of a peevish suckling in its mother's arms? No one knows better than Lord Rosebery that an attack on the Lords is really an attack on the Throne. One cannot exist without the other. Is treason to the Crown, — Is treachery to your oaths, a light and laughing matter? What is the oath of a Privy Councillor? "You shall be a true and faithful servant unto
 " the Queen's Majesty, you shall not know of any manner,
 " of thing to be attempted, done, or spoken against Her
 " Majesty's person, house, crown, or dignity royal. You
 " shall lett and withstand the same to the uttermost of
 " your power. . . . And generally, *in all things*, you
 " shall do as a true and faithful servant ought to do to
 " Her Majesty." Is a Minister a "true and faithful servant" to Her Majesty, who agitates for the destruction of a portion of the Constitution which, in its ruin, would eventually entail the fall of the Throne? We here then have the pleasant spectacle

of a Prime Minister—and a Privy Councillor, who has taken the oath of a Privy Councillor that he would allow nothing to be done which could affect the “Dignity” of the Crown—not only pledging himself to overthrow a portion of the Legislature, and of the Constitution of which the Crown is the head; but also pledging himself to destroy it by “unconstitutional means” if necessary, and if he receives the proper amount of “guidance and inspiration” from below. Oaths seem to sit but lightly on these Ministers’ consciences. The Privy Councillor in his oath, swears that he will suffer nothing that will affect the “Dignity” or House of his Sovereign. How can a Privy Councillor support a movement for establishing a “paramount Chamber,” “paramount” over the authority of the Crown, without affecting the “Dignity” of the Sovereign, and how then can a Privy Councillor affect the “Dignity” of the Crown without being false to his oath? Mr. Gladstone is a Privy Councillor, Lord Rosebery is one, Mr. Morley is one also, and when these Privy Councillors readily assent, not only to this attack on the Lords, but to the demand for superior authority over the Sovereign, I will ask them how they find it possible to reconcile their pledges to the Democratic Party with their oaths to their Sovereign as Privy Councillors. If the consciences of these Ministers are not troubled when they remember their oaths, there must be something peculiar in democratic principles which enables Ministers to forget the sacredness of an oath, and to act as public men in a fashion which would be called dishonourable in private life.

XXI.

We will now deal with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech at the meeting at Portsmouth on February 14th, on the occasion of the gathering of the National Liberal Association. The occasion was remarkable for two events. It was remarkable as being the occasion on which a Cabinet Minister of high standing, ability, of great influence in this country, of an experience and an authority far greater than those possessed by his Chief, pledged himself, in the face of his nation, by supporting the Resolution adopted by the Federation to the policy of placing all the powers of Government in the hands of one assembly. But the occasion was perhaps even more memorable for an incident which marked it. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was the guest at the meeting. A naval officer was the Chairman of it.* In this free country there is nothing to prevent the Chancellor of the Exchequer from attacking the Lords and the Throne as much as he pleases, except, of course, his oaths, which seem to be easily forgotten when a democratic minister has to gain the applause of a democratic gathering. But a naval officer in her Majesty's service, wearing her Majesty's uniform, and holding her Majesty's commission is bound, whether a democrat or not, to take notice, as chairman, at any political meeting, of any outburst of disloyalty of any kind if it comes before his notice—at least that has hitherto been the usual custom in the Royal services. But what happened at this Portsmouth meeting? When the National Anthem was

* Captain the Hon. Thomas Brand.

commenced the assemblage rose, not to join in it but to drown it with yells, hooting, jeers, and shouts, and to insult the Queen by this open disloyalty—and this at Portsmouth—with a naval officer in the chair !* What did that officer do ? Either he would not or dared not interfere with a single protest against this insult to his Queen. Not a syllable of remonstrance, not an attempt, however slight, to use the authority of a chairman to stop this disloyal outbreak was made by the officer who was in the chair. Ought not this officer to have left the chair at once when his Queen was insulted ? Or, at the very least, to have publicly explained his conduct afterwards ? It is difficult to understand why the conduct of this officer was not brought to the notice of his superior authorities or submitted to the notice of the Service Clubs to which it is understood this gentleman still belongs. How long would a naval officer, at a time not very distant, have been allowed by his brother officers to continue in their society if he had allowed the Queen's name to be insulted in public and had not had either the courage or the loyalty to denounce it from the chair he occupied ? Fortunately for our country, it is not always that the National Anthem is dealt with in that manner by those who wear the Queen's uniform. We have lately read of that gallant band of Englishmen in Matabeleland who died in their country's service with the notes of that loyal Anthem of their country the last words uttered by them in life—true and loyal men to the death. Compare

* See *Morning Post*, *Daily News*, Portsmouth Papers of Feb. 15, 1894.

those heroes who died face to face with the savages of Africa, with words of loyalty on their dying lips, with the officer who held her Majesty's 'commission, who had not a word to say as a protest, when these civilized Englishmen shouted down the Anthem of their country. In the heroism of the one there is something that will make an Englishman's pulse beat quicker with pride as long as history records the tale. In the act of the officer there is something which jars terribly with the confidence and trust which Englishmen have hitherto reposed, without questioning, in the loyalty of the officers of the Royal Navy, a confidence which has been as rudely shaken by the silence and inaction of the Naval Authorities and the Naval Clubs, as by the disloyal act of this officer itself. Whatever may be the explanation of this Naval Officer, the fact remains that an officer in Her Majesty's service was Chairman at a meeting of the National Liberal Association which declared that the Chamber of the People should be "paramount" over the authority of the Queen. And this is what the Navy tolerates in these days! As an illustration—and it is nothing more—of the licence allowed to democratic action, it is complete.

XXII.

It was at this meeting the Chancellor of the Exchequer indulged in one of his usual tirades against the Peers to which we are long accustomed—that was to be expected—but what gave his speech value and importance was that he supported, as the mouthpiece of Lord Rosebery's Administration, the resolution which had

been proposed and adopted by the National Liberal Association, and that resolution was, as we have seen, as follows :—

“That the habitual disregard of the national will, manifested by the House of Lords in delaying, mutilating, and rejecting measures demanded by the country and approved by the House of Commons, is an intolerable abuse of the powers possessed by the hereditary and non-representative Chamber; and that the Ministry may be assured of the enthusiastic and strenuous support of the Liberal party in whatever measures it adopts to secure that the House of Commons shall be the paramount authority in the State.”

In his speech, and also by his presence, the Chancellor of the Exchequer enforced the demand and supported the Resolution for the complete independence, the “paramount authority,” of the Lower House. It is this claim on the part of a single Chamber to exercise “paramount authority” over the Crown, which can never be permitted, and will endanger the peace of the country. And it is to this grave and almost seditious enterprise that the Chancellor of the Exchequer stands pledged. Could he, as an honourable statesman, utter such an indictment against the Lords and fail to take action against them? It cannot be supposed that he could withdraw from the attack he has done so much to inspire, or would be content with some harmless, inoffensive, half-hearted action. To take a slight liberty with Horace, shall we have to say at some future time “*Mons parturit:—nascitur ridiculus Mus.*?” Can it be supposed for a moment that like another illustrious statesman, on another state occasion, he would chalk up on the walls of West-

minster, "Down with the Lords," and then run away to the glens and glades of the New Forest?

XXIII.

True it is that the magnificent promise of the opening of the campaign in the earlier part of the Session in 1894 against the House of Lords, so successfully inaugurated by Mr. Labouchere, was not sustained or fulfilled in Parliament during the rest of the Session, whatever may have been the case in the country outside Parliament. The cannonade tailed off into a dropping fire of small shot, of the peashooter kind, against the fortress. The valiant heroes of the besieging force thought better of storming the House, and preferred an underground method of attack, and prepared and sprung a mine under the Chairs of the unoffending Clerks of the House—as they sat at the table of that House, a non-combatant body of men—and as perfectly innocent of any of the frightful charges brought against the Members of the House as the very chairs themselves. It was, undeniably, a brilliant and original conception of genius of a very high order to imagine a tactical operation so grand and so sure of attaining its end, as the commencement of the demolition of the Peers of England by stopping the pay of the Clerks of that House! And this was the sublime act of Democratic Statesmanship! But whatever we may think of its petty malignity—however we may despise and laugh at it for its contemptible absurdity—we must not forget that it narrowly escaped being crowned with the same success as Mr. Labouchere's more bold and straightforward proposal. It was a bare

majority of nine which saved the Clerks,—and of course, the Constitution ! Perhaps when the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduces his next Budget—no, I beg pardon, the next Finance Bill—after having invoked Heaven and Earth to witness the iniquities of the Peers, he will propose, in the lofty tones befitting the subject, to abolish the pay of the Charwomen of the Chamber ! And why not ? If the Clerks at the Table are to be “ended,” why are the Charwomen to be neither “mended” nor “ended” ? Surely the crimes of these “enemies of the People” are very much the same. If the Clerks are to be “ended” because they sit in chairs at the Table of the Lords, why are not the Charwomen—humble but dangerous personages !—whose degrading duty it is to dust the crimson benches of the “hereditary miscreants” *—to be “ended,” or “mended” ? If the “hereditary miscreants” are not so easily to be turned out of their Chamber by resolutions, it is, indeed, a noble thought to attack the Peers by stopping the pay of the Clerks of that House.

XXIV.

Jesting, however, is out of place, beyond a passing laugh at the extravagance of a section of irresponsible democrats who have broken away from the main body and followed their own devices and tried to force the pace of their own leaders and party. If the onslaught upon the unoffending Clerks in the House of Lords was calculated to bring ridicule and contempt upon the whole movement, it would be a terrible mistake to

* Sir W. Lawson's speech at Leeds, June, 1894.

imagine that underneath these follies there did not lie a deep and grave seriousness of purpose. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is a leader of very different mettle to these untrained skirmishers. He will neither lead them into ridiculous positions nor will he abandon them in the hour of need. Marshal Soult once said that the presence of Napoleon in the field of battle was always worth 10,000 men. If the extreme and undisciplined section of his party, probably of his Irish Brigade, have run riot and placed themselves in a position of ridicule, the ingenuity of the Chancellor of the Exchequer will have little difficulty in retrieving the lost laurels, and his presence, as that of a leader in whom they confide, will prove of a Napoleonic value to his regular, as well as irregular, troops in the coming struggle.

XXV.

A man and a statesman credited with the possession of honour and personal integrity, he will stand to his guns. Such a chief will not retreat from the head of his forces in the face of the enemy and leave his followers to carry on a guerilla warfare, such as has hitherto given these attacks the character of unreality and harmlessness. At least, we are bound to suppose that such will be the case. No doubt there are sceptics in this world. But he is bound and pledged to the hilt to follow up his Portsmouth philippics with deeds to prove to a somewhat sceptical world that his brave words were not empty hectoring. It is the fact of the honour of these great English leaders being

pledged to advance on this path of revolution that gives (as it is so important, so vitally important to insist upon) such gravity and darkness to the future. There is not a statesman in England who is more fully aware than the Chancellor of the Exchequer that, when the two antagonistic lines of Constitutionalism and (if such a barbarous word can be coined) the "Unicameranism" of democracy are advancing to close quarters against each other, as they are now doing—one line or the other—as in battle with armed battalions—must give way if a collision is to be avoided. Moidas do not occur every day, either in actual war or in political strife. But in this crisis what can prevent a political Moida? If neither line gives way (and which will do so?) the shock of a collision is, of course, inevitable. If that be so and neither line will give way (as at Moida) after (still to use warlike metaphors) the crash of fixing bayonets has been heard and two bristling lines of glittering cold steel are levelled to the charge, what human force can prevent a collision? As in war, so in political conflict. And, if this is so, will not those, who, like the Chancellor of the Exchequer, have encouraged their rank and file by their Rhodian rhetoric and their inflammatory appeals to the people to follow them as their heaven-born leaders, be bound in honour to lead this crusade, or at any rate to couch their lances against the enemy, whether or not this crusade leads to the fall of the Crown and plunges their country into all the hellish horrors of civil war? The hour has struck;—the "Jihad" has been proclaimed;—the "Sacred Shirt"*

* Mr. Labouchere has announced, *urbi et orbi*,—the gratify-

has been unfolded;—the Prophet has arisen!—the Mahdi is there! Surely the last faint hopes of averting a collision must vanish when the chiefs of the army advance to the front, as they are advancing now, and sword in hand, lead the charge at the head of their troops. And this is the perilous position of the two contending factions—and the fearful responsibility of the Ministers who now rule the destinies of England.

XXVI.

But another Cabinet Minister has spoken. This time it is the Secretary for Ireland, who has been frank and outspoken, even to the verge of sedition. As, however, in the whole of his speech against the House of Lords there is not a single new argument, it is not necessary to go over old ground to answer the old, tattered, and well-worn arguments. But if his arguments were old, his threats were new, and very significant. This is what he says :—

“ I would only say, do not forget that there is very little chance of our being in practice and effect other than what is called unicameran, because the House of Commons will never tolerate the creation of a rival, equal, or co-ordinate rival authority.”

A Single Chamber—unchecked—uncontrolled !

And again :—

“ As Mr. Gladstone said, the time of taking the people's

ing fact that, when the time comes for him to “strip”—to do battle against the Lords,—he is ready not only to take off his coat and waistcoat, but his shirt also ! Mr. Labouchere's shirt, like Mahomed's, would, of course, rouse the wild enthusiasm of “the Faithful” to the very verge of phrenzy in the day of battle ;—like the “White Plume,” of Henry of Navarre,—wherever the fray was the thickest,—there would be seen the maddening, soul-thrilling sight of the shirt of Mr. Labouchere !

judgment on this question must rest with the Cabinet of the day. (Hear, hear.) We may depend upon it, gentlemen, that whatever we may decide upon this movement, which entered upon a new phase at Leeds, must go on—(cheers)—because the diversity between political judgment and political sentiment in the House of Lords and in the House of Commons is unfortunately not likely to grow less as time goes on, but the contrary. The more people like you find the possession of political power in your hands, the more will political demands be made which the House of Lords will be disinclined to accept. Therefore we cannot look forward—I regret it—to a time when the divergence between the House of Lords and the House of Commons will grow less. We must look forward to a constant widening of that divergence, and therefore, gentlemen, the movement—let them mock as they like—the movement which was begun at Leeds was a spontaneous movement, it was not an artificial movement, it was a movement which arose out of political urgency, and it is a movement of which we shall not hear the last until some effective step has been taken to carry out the will of the people."

This gives us the full programme of the Revolutionary Party. A Unicameran Government—(we owe this uncouth word "unicameran" to the Secretary of Ireland)—to exercise "paramount" authority without control or check over English legislation.

But Mr. Morley falls back on a great authority to support him, as he imagines. He calls Mr. Bright into court to bear witness against the Lords. But if ever a case was damaged by its own witness, it is Mr. Morley's—Mr. Bright has answered Mr. Morley. Mr. Morley says, it must be remembered, that the Commons will not tolerate a "co-ordinate" authority such as the Lords possess at present. Very good! What says Mr. Bright?

"Why not enact that if the Peers have rejected a Bill once,

and it has been considered in a subsequent Session by the Commons, and after due deliberation has been again sent up to the Peers, it would pass and should receive the Royal assent and become law. (Cheers.) Now, I said years ago that a House of Legislature, hereditary and irresponsible, cannot be a permanent institution in a free country. (Cheers.) Bear in mind I said hereditary and irresponsible. By some method the two Houses, if they are to continue to exist, must be reconciled. They must be equally or sufficiently responsible to the national wants and the national conscience. That, perhaps, is difficult, but it is not impossible. I say no more about it. This is not the time, but I recommend the observations I have made upon it to the calm consideration of the people of this country."

Although the House of Lords has known no more determined adversary than Mr. Bright, his objection to it was founded on the ground of its composition in its "hereditary principle and irresponsibility," and not to it as a Second Chamber.

Every word, therefore, of Mr. Bright is fatal to Mr. Morley. Mr. Bright says the two Houses could be reconciled. Mr. Morley thinks it impossible to reconcile the Upper House with the Lower House. Mr. Bright holds an opinion exactly the reverse, and believes that such a reconciliation "although difficult, is *not* impossible!"

Mr. Morley objects to any Chamber whatever, whether it was elective, nominated, or hereditary.

Mr. Bright objects to it because of its "hereditary principle and irresponsibility," both of which could be reformed without its destruction.

Mr. Morley wants to abolish the House of Lords. Mr. Bright would rather save it by reform. He wants

to reform it, if by so doing he would save it, and so recognizes its vital necessity as a part of the Parliamentary machinery. Exactly the reverse are the views of Mr. Morley. Mr. Bright, in condemning the House of Lords as an "hereditary and irresponsible" Chamber, laid the greatest stress on the fact that his objection to the House of Lords was solely on account of its "hereditary and irresponsible character," not because it was a second Chamber. Mr. Bright says "Reform it and let it be reconciled to the Lower House." Mr. Morley says exactly the opposite, "Let it die, root and branch, it cannot be reformed or reconciled," and this is Mr. Morley's own witness.

Mr. Bright, then, has not helped Mr. Morley one iota, for the purpose for which he was specially invoked, in his crusade for suppressing, instead of reforming, the Upper House. On the contrary, when as I repeat, Mr. Bright stated his objections to that House he guards himself by saying, "Bear in mind I said 'hereditary and irresponsible,'" that is to say, "Reform the House in these respects, and it will work with the Commons." Reform the Upper House, but do not destroy it, if you can possibly help it—that is Mr. Bright's argument. Could there be anything more diverse or antagonistic than the views of Mr. Morley and Mr. Bright whom the Secretary for Ireland has called to support him?

And, clearly, while we find that Mr. Bright "states that an hereditary and irresponsible Chamber could not be a permanent institution in a free country," laying stress upon the words "hereditary and irresponsible," it is of great importance to observe that he never

uttered a single word in favour of the abolition of the House of Lords, pure and simple, if it could be reformed. Much less has he ever uttered a word in favour of that "Unicameran" theory which would be logically, absolutely, and diametrically opposed to the views he took, that the two Houses could be, and might be, reconciled. To reconcile the two Houses, which Mr. Bright believes possible, and Mr. Morley impossible, would be clearly fatal to Mr. Morley's Unicameran idea of parliamentary government. The very fact of Mr. Bright being in favour of a reconciliation between the two Houses and his belief in its feasibility, proves that he was distinctly opposed to the "Unicameran" system of Mr. Morley, which would not as he expresses it "tolerate the existence of an equal, or co-ordinate authority," such an authority that is, as the House of Lords possesses at present.

In fact, if the principle of hereditary legislation had been abolished (and it is quite possible that at some future, not very distant, day it may be found wise to jettison that part of the cargo of the vessel of State) and if some kind of elective principle or a non-hereditary selection or some nominative process had been introduced, Mr. Bright would have been satisfied with the Upper House. Mr. Morley and his friends would be exactly the reverse, because such a reform would not only have recognized the necessity of the House itself, but would give it a new vitality—a new lease of useful life, and an increased power to the Upper Chamber—which is the very thing least desired by the democrats of the day.

And this difference, which is so marked, between Mr.

Bright and Mr. Morley, is an excellent example of the wide gulf which separates the old Constitutional Radicalism of sixty years ago—if we can call it so, and the new democratic demands. The old Radicalism asked for reforms to make the old institutions run more smoothly together and work more harmoniously. The modern democrats ask for their complete destruction so as to grasp supreme power in a form of government which would be entirely at variance with the doctrines of Mill or Bright. When the Radicals sacked Nottingham and burnt Bristol, and when Birmingham threatened to march on London, it was to obtain a Reform of the Electoral system, not to shatter a Throne—and upset a Constitution. The Democrats now ask for a Unicameran Government. This is not Reform. It is not Radicalism. It is Revolution—pure and simple, and we have a right to say that to such a form of government we will never submit. Mr. Bright, unlike Mr. Morley, was a Reformer, but never a Revolutionist. He was true to the People—but he was as true to his Sovereign—and he would have opposed to the death the Unicameran Chamber which was to supersede the authority of the Crown—and be the “paramount” authority in the State.

XXVII.

When Mr. Morley, who proposes to make the authority of the Commons “paramount” over the Crown, ventures to call Mr. Bright as a witness to support his views, let him remember that Mr. Bright always repudiated the charge of being a “Democrat.”

He said, on more than one occasion, "I am not a 'Democrat.'" Certainly, he never was a "Democrat" in the sense of the word as it would be used by Mr. Morley. At Manchester, December 10th, 1858, he says in his Reform speech, "We will mention "two or three things that we do not want. We "do not propose in the smallest degree to call in "question or to limit the prerogatives of the Crown. I "believe we are prepared to say that if the throne of "England be filled with so much dignity, and so much "purity as we have known it in our time, and as "we know it now to be, we hope that the "venerable Monarchy may be perpetual. Nor do "we wish to discuss even, much less to limit, "the legal and Constitutional privileges or pre- "rogatives of the House of Peers." What would the Democrats of to-day say to such Radicalism? Would it be possible to reconcile these views of Mr. Bright's with the Unicameran doctrines of Mr. Morley? Mr. Bright, to whom thousands of the masses of the people still look with veneration for guidance as to what they should do, was the Radical Champion of the people—the advocate of Free Trade—the opponent of this country's Foreign policy and the wars it produced—the foe of class oppression—the advocate of all civil and religious liberty; but never by word or deed, was Mr. Bright disloyal to his Sovereign. He never by word or deed has given the slightest suggestion that he would consent to any such organic alteration in the Institutions of the State as the substitution of the Sovereignty of the

People in a Single Assembly for the Sovereignty of the Crown. *Nor will it ever be forgotten how Mr. Bright in London on an occasion when his Queen's name was treated lightly before some Radical gathering leapt to his feet, and with indignant eloquence, in burning words, defended his Queen as only Mr. Bright could do. We know how a Naval Officer of the present day behaved when his Queen was insulted. We know too how Mr. Bright behaved, and the difference between the Radical of the past and the Democrat of to-day is complete! In the same speech at Manchester, Mr. Bright declares: "If anybody says that we are for levelling doctrines, that we intend to have a President instead of a Queen, you, at least (at Manchester) will not believe them." He repudiated with scorn the very notion of superseding the Queen by a President. What would he have said to the notion of superseding both Queen and President by one "paramount" Chamber?

Again, after emphatically stating that he "was not a Democrat" he, at Manchester, on November 20th, 1866, in a speech on Reform, says, "I believe that if it (that is, the extension of the Suffrage to certain classes) were so extended we should arrive at a point at which so long as any of us are permitted to meddle with the politics of our country no further change would be demanded. I am in accord with our ancient Constitution" (no "Unicameran" Government! no Abolition of the House of the Peers!) "and I will stand by it!" Memorable words! and words that Mr. Morley would do well to ponder upon before he calls Mr. Bright to give testimony in his favour again.

* Bright's answer to Mr. Ayrton at St. James's Hall, Dec. 4th, 1866.

XXVIII.

And why should Mr. Bright's theory of reconciliation of the two Houses be impracticable?

Although it is the object, of course, of these remarks to show the value of the House of Lords as a Second Chamber, in doing so, it is not in the least necessary to deny for a moment that the hereditary principle in the Lords is the weak point in the line of the defence. It is the point on which hitherto, in the days of the old fashioned Radicalism all attacks were concentrated, and there are thousands of voters now who would vote for the abolition of the Peers solely on the ground of that hereditary principle, and who would not vote against an Upper Chamber unless such a principle existed. Now it must be remembered that the hereditary principle, which is absolutely indefensible in theory, and can only be defended by the fact of its having worked well and peacefully for centuries, is not a vital necessity to the Upper House. On the contrary, if the hereditary principle ceased to exist all the essential powers, all the powers which make it the co-ordinate authority in the State with the Commons, would still survive and be considerably strengthened. But however that may be, it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that in the present day it is not against the hereditary principle that the democrats are crying, but against the existence of any Second Chamber whatever, and I would ask those who are going to vote against the Lords on account of the hereditary principle, two things :—First, is it a very reasonable thing to abolish the whole of a Chamber in order to reform a part of the whole which

can be reformed? And I would also ask them to bear in mind that even now a very large proportion of the Peers who vote in the Upper House, do not vote by hereditary right. In the House of Lords there are about 500 Peers. Of these, including Archbishops, Bishops, Irish and Scotch Representative Peers, Lords of Appeal, and about 65 "first creations," in all about 140 do not vote by hereditary right. So that nearly 25 per cent—or a quarter of the voting power of the Upper House—is in the hands of those who are no more hereditary legislators than members of the House of Commons. But it might be deemed advisable to save the most valuable part of this branch of the Legislature by getting rid of the whole of the least valuable, and so do away with one of Mr. Bright's objections.

If a permanent and complete reconciliation between the two Houses could be effected at the cost of the ending the hereditary principle, it is possible that a maximum of benefit to the nation might be obtained by the minimum sacrifice and cost of what is now a danger and a weakness.

XXIX.

If the Portsmouth meeting, where the Chancellor of the Exchequer sounded the keynote of this threatened revolution by demanding that there should be one "paramount" Chamber, the Leeds Conference so far altered the mode of attack as to disguise the demand for the abolition of the Upper House under the very thin veil of a curtailment of the Peers' powers, such as by the ending of the Veto. Of course the ending of the Veto

is the same as the ending of the House, and it is not necessary to discuss the two separately. On one point the Leeds Conference were clear and definite, that the Veto must be abolished. We have, then, united on this one point, the late Prime Minister, the present Prime Minister, the whole of the present Administration, the Liberal Association, the thousand Delegates representing, doubt it as much as you please, a large mass of opinion, at the Leeds Conference. We must, indeed, be living in a fool's paradise if we under-estimate what is passing before our eyes.

XXX.

Significant as the Leeds Conference undoubtedly was in its political decision, it marks, in one respect, a very remarkable advance upon the Portsmouth meeting. At Portsmouth, at any rate, there was not a speaker who had the courage to speak in terms of approval of the murder of a king. At Leeds was heard, for the first time in public for many years, from an educated Englishman, an open approval of regicide. Since this controversy began no such violent and treasonable language has been heard as was uttered by Sir W. Lawson. It was reserved for this Apostle of Temperance to openly express approval of regicide, besides using other choice expressions, such as calling the Peers "*hereditary miscreants*." In tones of pride, he states that he is "proud to belong to a people who beheaded 'their King.'" A precious sample of the eloquence of Temperance ! There is not a drunkard in England who would not be ashamed of the language used by this Apostle of Temperance !

In this case, under the garb of the democrat, you find the heart of the regicide ! Allusion is made to this gentleman's utterances principally to illustrate the lengths to which Parliamentary authorities as well as judicial will, very unwisely, permit seditious harangues to pass unchallenged in these times. I would, however, venture to ask why this approval of regicide by a Member of Parliament—which was uttered as an open incentive to the masses to follow the example he approved of (or it would be without meaning) has been allowed to pass unnoticed by the Speaker in Parliament? Is there no one in the House of Commons with sufficient courage to call this mischievous agitator to account for this attempt at high treason? Surely there is not a very wide difference between the politician who is "proud to belong to the nation which beheaded its king," and the anarchist who carries that approval of regicide into practice and assassinates the ruler of a country. Sir Wilfrid Lawson applauds those who beheaded their sovereign. Has Sir Wilfrid forgotten the Parliamentary oath he has taken? Contrast these two cases. A wretched printer named Cantwell is put into the dock for threats against the sovereign. The Baronet is "proud to belong to a nation which beheaded its king," and was not placed by Cantwell's side. If ever there was a political case for the Public Prosecutor it was this. It was a gross and glaring injustice that Cantwell was punished and Sir Wilfrid Lawson allowed to go free. And it was all the more grossly unjust because this approval of regicide, with the suggestion it would convey — coming from an educated man — a Member c

Parliament—holding a good position in that class of society which he delights in befouling—a leader in the Temperance Party—is far more likely to produce evil results than the vapouring menaces of the uneducated, wretched, half-starved printer Cantwell. And the time which the Baronet chooses to expound his regicidal doctrines is a moment when there seems to be a dangerous epidemic of assassination spreading throughout Europe and attacking civilized countries. Crispi and Carnot show that the doctrine of assassination does not want for willing hands to put it into execution. As the Public Prosecutor had not the courage to prosecute this Member of Parliament he has failed in his duty. Cantwell was punished. Sir W. Lawson was unpunished. One law for the rich man, another for the poor! This seems to be a bitter truth, when the sedition happens to be on the part of the poor man—when the poor man is picked out for punishment—because he is a poor man—and the rich man is allowed to escape—because he is a rich man—as in this case!

PART III.

I.

When the leading statesmen of the Liberal party deliberately adopt a policy which no one denies is a revolution, and when they ask the nation to alter the system of government and its whole Parliamentary and Constitutional system in order to establish a form of government exactly the reverse to that which had been in force for centuries; their only justification for the serious step they are taking, which will imperil the internal peace of the Empire, and consequently must involve the most serious responsibility, must be that the general feeling of the masses of the nation was ripe for such a revolutionary change. That the country has become more democratic in its opinions and customs (and especially if democracy is coupled with deterioration), may be admitted as an undeniable truth. Social signs are perhaps as significant in that respect as political symptoms. Free fights in Parliament, fisticuffs between members, scenes in the House of Parliament which would have disgraced an American backwoods Court House—scenes condoned by the Prime Minister, and not condemned by the Speaker by any word of censure in the journals of the House—freedom of manners of an American type permeating through all the sections of the social community, Prime Ministers leading in their winning race horses, to please a howling

racing mob, are as much tokens of the advance of what most English people understand as democracy, as the thunders of the Leeds Conference. Such a spectacle as the last, which must make not only the Nonconformist conscience but the "judicious" grieve, marks at once the strides with which democratic habits have socially advanced since the premierships of Lord Derby and Lord Palmerston. Both these statesmen owned racehorses and would have been proud to know that they were winners, but it would have been as probable in those days to have seen Lord Derby and Lord Palmerston lead in their winners on the Derby Racecourse as it would have been to have seen Lord Aberdeen or Mr. Gladstone—or, for that matter, the Archbishop of Canterbury—riding themselves the winning mount.

II.

Granted, however, the advance of democratic sentiments socially, there is a wide difference between such an advance and the political necessity for an alteration of government in obedience to the preponderance of these peculiar doctrines and customs which is more social than political. It is by no means proved that the vast majority of Englishmen are ripe for any alteration whatever. But, even if this were the case, and if it could be shown that there was a preponderance of democratic opinion over the present constitutional doctrines, even then these revolutionary statesmen, before they could justify their policy and theories, must prove a great deal more than merely that a large mass, of not perhaps the most intelligent opinion, had

become so impregnated with democratic opinions as to be ripe and ready for a democratic revolution. They must prove to demonstration first of all that the present form of Government, of an Upper House and a controlling power, is absolutely incompatible with the fullest supremacy of democracy. Allow, for a moment, that democracy is absolute in England, and that the country is ready to admit itself a democratic nation, to be governed by the usual forms which exist in acknowledged democratic countries, even then these statesmen have still to prove that you cannot have the most advanced democracy and a Second Chamber at one and the same time, and in the same country. It is perfectly immaterial whether the Second Chamber is elective or non-elective, so far as it concerns the existing agitation in England, because the Democrats demand that there should be no Second House whatever, however constituted. It is no matter whether such a House was elective, as in some other democracies—or non-elective—as it is, mainly at any rate, in this country. If it can be proved beyond all doubt that a democracy can exist, and have its will fully respected and obeyed—in perfect good working and harmony—with a Second Controlling Chamber, it is useless and more than useless for the revolutionists to point simply to the prevalence, and if they please the predominance, of democratic sentiments and political ideas as their justification for destroying a chamber which can be made to work well with democracy in other countries. Does France with her Universal Suffrage find it impossible to reconcile her democracy with the existence

of her Senate? Universal Suffrage in France affords to the Revolutionists in England an example which is absolutely fatal to their contention that democracy requires that there should be no Second House and no legislative government whatever beyond one single assembly representing the people. If Universal Suffrage in France does not insist upon a single "paramount" authority, why should not the democracy of England be satisfied with what is found to work so successfully with the most democratic suffrage in France? It will be said, of course, that those Upper Chambers, where they exist in continental democracies, are elective, or at any rate non-hereditary, and that is why they are accepted and acceptable in those communities. No doubt that is so, but that objection does not affect the argument in the least, and is, as I have already pointed out, perfectly immaterial, because the objection of the English democracy is not to the elements or the constitution of an Upper House, but to the very principle of its existence, in any shape or of any elements whatever. And so with the American Senate;—the difference in the constitution of the three Senates—vast as it is—has nothing to do with the question before us. As the opposition of the English abolitionists is not to the constitution of the English Senate, but to its existence as an obstacle in the way of an omnipotent paramount People's Chamber, it is obvious that even if an American Senate could be brought to this country and planted in English soil with all the methods of democratic institutions, it would still possess what to an English democrat is the fatal fault, the fault of the existence of a Senate

at all. So extreme are the demands of the English democracy, that it is very doubtful whether the American system, even with the power given by their Constitution to check the authority of the President, would find the smallest favour in the eyes of those who, more democratic than democratic America, are clamouring for the absolute supremacy of the Single Chamber. In America, the Constitution provides that majorities of four-fifths of both Houses—Congress and the Senate—shall overrule the Presidential Veto. But these powers would be repudiated by the latter-day democracy of England, which refuses to submit the people's sovereign will to any veto whatever, however limited, whether of an Upper Chamber, or of a President of a Republic, or a crowned and sceptred Sovereign ! In America—and no one can dispute that the American constitution is most admirably adapted to an intensely and purely democratic congregation of States—does Universal Suffrage any more than in France find any friction between the people and its Senate ? It would be an interesting matter for speculation to think what would be the result of a proposal made to the intelligent American nation by some "robust" Liberal to abolish their Senate, and with it their President, in order to put the whole executive power of legislation in the uncontrolled grasp of Congress. And yet this is the revolution in the government proposed to be established in England, and proposed by the democrats themselves.

III.

If it is argued by the democrat that there is no

analogy between the French and American Senates and the English Upper House, because the first are differently constituted to the latter, and are elective, and that the existence of the English House is repugnant to the democrat because it is non-elective and tainted with the hereditary principle, it can be answered or asked by the constitutionalist why, if only the hereditary principle and the absence of an elective process, which make the difference between the French and American and the English Upper Houses, are to be reasons (which they are not) for the demand of the Liberals for the destruction of the Peers, why should they not agitate solely for the ending of the hereditary principle, and for the introduction of some elective process, instead of demanding the destruction of the whole House? That would be a fair legitimate constitutional reform. It would be Reform—not Revolution. But for our purposes it is not necessary that there should be any analogy between the Upper Houses in two different countries so far as their composition is concerned. All that is necessary is to show that the French and American constitutions—representing the democracy of Europe, and the democracy of the West—recognize the necessity of a Second Chamber.

IV.

But even if the democrats can show that a Second House is opposed to democratic measures, and therefore an obstacle in their views to good government on democratic principles, they would still have to satisfy the country and their consciences that the form of govern-

ment they proposed to create, after having got rid of the Senate or Upper House, would be really a Democratic Government based on democratic principles. But would it be so if all the legislative power of the country was centred in one chamber? It would be nothing of the kind. Freedom is surely the boasted essence of democratic opinion. Where would freedom of speech be in a Single Assembly? How could party government exist? Decentralization is the very watchword of democracy. But what should we see in this case? A Single Chamber; a centralized authority; with no check nor control; a simple unadulterated dictatorship and despotism. A Single Chamber would be a thoroughly undemocratic chamber. Its power would be concentrated in the hands of a single chief. Whoever was leader of the majority in a Single Chamber would, for the term of years during which he was the leader, be the absolute despotic uncontrolled dictator of this country. The classes he chose to injure, the interests he wished to ruin, would be at his feet, to be destroyed without appeal or mercy. We have seen by the last democratic budget the fate in store for those classes who represent the better interests of the country opposed to a democratic Chancellor if the democrats gain the day. The Chancellor of the Exchequer of the present day has shown what little mercy or justice is to be expected from democratic statesmen where they are determined—from personal caprice or partisan hatred—to revenge themselves on the classes who are the objects of their personal and political animosity, and when they are determined to overburden and ruin the interests of any section of the

community who happen to be the objects of their envy and hatred as a class.

If the Liberals object to the House of Lords as it exists now, because it is, as they allege, a purely Conservative Chamber, where no Liberal measures have a chance of passing, would not the Conservatives, with much greater truth, be able to use precisely the same argument against a Single Chamber, namely, that it was a purely Radical Chamber, where no Conservative interest would have the slightest chance of fair play, or even toleration? and where in reality no Conservative Party would be allowed to exist?

V.

It will, I think, be seen that the English democratic leaders are asking for a revolution which is not even considered essential to the development and success of democratic government in purely democratic countries, which is utterly opposed to the true principles of democracy, and which, if successful, would place our interests, our political freedom, our political existence even, in the hands of a party who would show us no quarter, whose aim would be to destroy every interest, every authority, every class, which came into conflict with it. I have quoted France and America to refute the democrat in England. I will go further afield—to younger and fresher democracies—and I will summon the democracy of Australia to refute the democracy of this country.

In the Australasian Colonies will be found the fullest development of the purest type of democratic opinion—

A Democratic Government for a people essentially democratic. A Government, therefore, in consonance with the character and feelings of the people it has to govern ; and based on the widest democratic suffrage. But what do we find in these Australian democracies? What is their Parliamentary system? A Legislative Assembly, and a Legislative Council. So not only is there no single Chamber "paramount" in authority over all other legislative bodies, but there is a Second Chamber with a modified Veto—not, it is true, as absolute as that of the Lords in England—a Suspensory Veto,—still a "Veto," that is to say, a power of rejecting a Bill until it has passed twice the Legislative Assembly. In these Colonies the existence of a Second Chamber with this 'veto' has been found to be perfectly compatible with the opinions and interests and aspirations of a people imbued to the core of their hearts with the most genuine and undiluted principle of pure democracy—the principle, that is to say—that the majorities of a community shall have the freest and most unchecked voice in the legislation of the country so far as is compatible with the good government of the people. But even these democratic communities have found it necessary for the sake of good government to have a Second Chamber. They tolerate a Second Chamber but not an imperial Veto. This Imperial control is of very little use to the Imperial Government. The Imperial "veto" has vanished. If the Imperial Government had dared to use its "veto," it would, in the opinion of those best able to judge, undoubtedly have used it on three

different occasions—in each of the three colonies—within the last five years, to prevent the passing of such measures as the Kanaka Labour Bill in Queensland, or the Divorce Bill in Victoria, or the Tariff Bill in New South Wales. But it dared not use it. The Governors of those Colonies were perfectly aware that if the “Veto” had been put in force against those measures Australian loyalty would not have stood the strain. In England, the “veto” of the Sovereign is in abeyance. In Australia it is dead, that is to say, Australia will tolerate a “Veto” of a Second Chamber, but will not tolerate the “Veto” of the Imperial authority. This is a very strong proof that the existence of a Second Chamber is perfectly compatible with the existence of the purest democracy. It is more than that. It is a most striking evidence that a democracy so advanced as to be ready to refuse its Sovereign the power to interfere in its decisions, is ready to accept the principle of its Second Chamber controlling the legislation of the Lower House. Australian Democracy is ready to give a power to its Second Chamber which it is ready to refuse to its Sovereign. It is therefore through ignorance of facts that partisans of the Liberal party argue—as they so often do—in the press and in their public meetings, that the destruction of the Second Chamber in England is a necessary and logical consequence of advanced democratic opinion. Why should it be so in England if it is not so in Australia? If, then, these fiery young democracies in the Southern Seas have never ventured to go so far as to suggest that their Second Chamber, or Legislative

Council, should be dispensed with, and the whole government centred, without control, in a Single Chamber, in order that the will of the people (no mere phrase in Australian politics), should be paramount, is there not something marvellously absurd in the democracy of our *un*-democratic England outbidding the most fiery democracies in the universe by proposing to overthrow, in the name of democracy, a system of government which the purest democracies known in modern times are willing to accept without a murmur?

VI.

Does any human being of ordinary intelligence, or of the most advanced views, judged even by an Australian standard, believe that a system which would be too democratic even for the palate of the Australian democracy, would be really adapted to the tastes, and character, and temperament, and traditions of the English nation? Why are we then to reject a Second Chamber when Australian democratic opinion believes it to be indispensable to the good government of the Colony. No doubt, as in France and America, the fact that there is no hereditary principle in the constitution of the Legislative Council accounts very considerably for the acquiescence of the Colonial communities in the power of veto in the second chamber. But, we must repeat again, and again, that it must be borne in mind that the democracy in England are clamouring not for the reform of the House of Lords, but its cessation, not on account of its hereditary privileges,

but because the democracy does not intend that any Second Chamber whatever, whether hereditary, or elective, or nominated, should stand in the future in the way of its "paramount" and supreme authority. Australians, of course, would laugh to scorn the very notion of an hereditary Chamber; at present at any rate. For at present these communities have not existed long enough to enable them to possess a class which would provide the material from which an aristocracy could be formed as in European States. Australian opinion at present cheerfully submits, though democratic to the backbone, to the control of a Second Chamber—untainted, it is true, by the objections to an hereditary Chamber, but still armed with a power of rejection. How then do we stand? English democracy objects to the principle of a Second House and to its obnoxious existence. Australian democracy agrees to it. It is then the mother country which is now seeking to destroy what her own offspring—the wayward, and strong-willed democracies under the Southern Cross—are quite willing to accept with perfect and absolute contentment.

VII.

If these democracies are at all inclined to show a turbulent and restive spirit, it is not against that portion of the governmental system, the Second Chamber. There may be a simmering of political unrest in Australia, but it comes from a very different source. It comes from the proud consciousness those young Colonies feel of their approaching manhood and the sense of the maturity of their own

powers—the feeling that they are now far more ripened, far more capable of working out alone the problem of their political destinies than were the North American Colonies when they revolted from English rule, and, in their anger and hatred, swung back the political pendulum from Monarchy to a Republic. When the American Colonies revolted they could not boast one tithe of all those ingredients, so indispensable as a basis of prosperity to a new born nation, and which alone can place a new country on a secure foundation, which the Australians now possess in abundance. The North Americans had very little stock-in-trade to start with when they set up a Republic. Australia has now all those attributes of a nation in which the North Americans were wanting, in railways, in communications by land and sea, in the development of Parliamentary systems, by the extension of endless industries, both pastoral and commercial, in social progress, in the freedom of the Press, and by the innumerable advantages which the civilization of the end of the nineteenth century can give to a rising colony which has been carefully and wisely nurtured by the care of England, over the colonies of the eighteenth century. If, then, the democracy of Australia feel any desire whatever for any alteration in their present system of government it is not to be found in opposition to their Second Assembly. Whatever dissatisfaction there may be, it arises, and arises only, from a feeling which does the Colonials credit, that the hour is near at hand when, without the slightest semblance of a feeling of ingratitude, much less of hate, towards the mother country,

they may fairly claim to be strong enough to take their place unaided amongst the independent nations of the world, whether as a federated continent of nations, or, as it must be eventually, a single united nation and free from the leading strings and tutelage of the mother country. It is against that tutelage that the Australian democracy chafes and frets, and against it it will eventually rise. And it would, indeed, be wise for English statesmen to accept the inevitable, and abandon the useless and discreditable exhibition of sham Governorships, with mere fictions of an Imperial legislative power which they dare not use, and let the Australian Colonies go unfettered on their glorious way towards the independence and position of a free and separate nation, still bound, as they would then be, by the ties of affection, by every chain and link, except those incompatible with national independence. Better a hundred times to give up in peace and friendliness those chains of dependence and control which are now beginning to gall the minds of the Australian communities, than see them torn asunder in times of anger and ill-blood! However that may be, and, of course, it is a controversial point, and one in which a great variety of opinion exists, more, perhaps, in England than in Australia, probably all Colonials and most Englishmen will, at any rate, agree in the one point which is essential to this argument, namely, that whatever feeling there may be against any portion of the mode of Government of the Australian Colonies, it is not against that part which is represented by the Second Chamber.

VIII.

Federation will precede independence. But, when the Australian Colonies in the course of time pass from Federation to Independence and become an independent nation, there will be no greater testimony to the success of a controlling Chamber than the introduction of such a legislative power again into the new Constitution, which will have to be framed anew to govern under its new auspices united and independent Australia. Will it be so? To answer that question it is interesting to know the opinions of those leading Colonial statesmen who are now working strenuously in favour of federation (which is naturally the first step on the way to independence) and to know what they propose should be the machinery for the Government of a new Australia—a United Australia, but not as yet independent of an Imperial Supremacy.

Sir George Dibbs, the Premier of New South Wales, has only very recently borne invaluable testimony to the fact that the example of Australia proves conclusively that a Second Chamber can work, with perfect success, in harmony with a genuine democracy. It is true Sir George Dibbs is not an advocate of the Federation scheme, that is to say, as understood by Sir Henry Parkes—but he has taken the lead in the Colonies in advocating a united Australia. Sir George Dibbs has proposed that the four Colonies of Australia should be united in the future into one Colony—with one Government, under one Constitution, under one supreme authority. We may be assured that if the control of a Second Chamber had been found by ex-

perience unsuited to the Australian democracy, a Colonial statesman of the experience of Sir George Dibbs would never have suggested that the Legislative Council should again be included, without any modification, as part of the machinery of the new constitution of United Australia. But Sir George Dibbs, by proposing that the Legislative Council should still take its place as a Second Assembly, stamps with the seal of his long Colonial experience of democratic necessities, his testimony to the fact that a Second Assembly has worked with such success in the past that he proposes to make it an integral portion of that new constitution which is to be the starting point of a new stage of Australian existence, and to guide and strengthen the Australian Colonies in their attempt to be a united nation. If Sir George Dibbs can carry out his proposal, if he can assuage the jealousies of the various Colonies, if he can unite them, if he can settle the very burning question as to whether the capital of the United Australia is to be in New South Wales or in Victoria, in Melbourne or in Sydney, he will have proved himself one of the ablest, certainly the most successful, of Colonial statesmen. But sufficient for our purpose is it that his opinion, his experience in questions of government, is of the highest importance in discussing the contrasts, as well as the analogies, of English and Australian democracy, and the forms of government best adapted for them. And his testimony therefore is most valuable.

We may therefore assume that as in the youth of Australia so in the maturity of Australia, the system which has proved itself successful as a part of a

Democratic Parliamentary authority will be accepted in the new constitution which must mark the new departure of Australia, in the form of a united and independent State, and that a Second Chamber — a Legislative Council, will still be found in its old place to exercise a controlling power over Australian legislation.

PART IV.

I.

Now that the eventful moment has come when democracy in its worst form is face to face with the old order of things, it is well to remember that the Democratic Party cannot, with justice or truth, say that, so long as their claims or ends were legitimate, the Conservative Party did not recognize them and meet them fairly. The principle of the extension of self government, the granting of the widest liberty which could be given to the people to manage and control their own affairs, has been of late years as fully recognized by the Conservative Party as by the Liberal. It should never be forgotten that it was the Conservative Government and Party, of which the House of Lords is supposed to be nothing but the mouthpiece, which first gave, through the Local Government Act, the system of County Councils to the people. It was the Conservative Party, with their Chamber — the Lords — which gave to the rural ratepayer the same right to have a voice in the control of the management of the rates which he was paying, as the urban population had acquired through the Municipal Corporations Act. For fifty years afterwards the extra-urban ratepayer had to pay his rates to an irresponsible authority, without being allowed the slightest control over the authority which imposed these rates. For fifty years not a word was heard from Liberal Governments in favour of

equalizing the positions of the two classes of ratepayers, and why? Solely because the votes of the towns, which were to be benefitted by the Municipal Corporations Act, were principally given to the Liberals, and the votes of the rural populations which were ignored, were given to the Tories. This was Liberal Government! It remained for the Conservative Government, and their servile henchmen, the Lords, to deal impartially with all sections of ratepayers and remedy the evil, and to place the ratepayer in the country on the same footing as the ratepayer in the town.

II.

To give such self-government to the country was a step in the direction of Democratic Government, which showed that the Conservative Party and the Lords, would meet the requirements of the people—of the Democracy, to use the word in its best sense—as far and as fully as was reasonable and legitimate. We are told that the Conservative Ministers oppose all measures for the benefit of the masses. We may answer with a clear conscience that the greatest extension of self-government in later times was given to the people by the Tories who abolished—what the Liberals had failed to do—the irresponsible power of the Country Magistracy to levy rates without those from whom the rates were levied having, through a proper representation and system of popular election, any control over this taxation. What the Liberals did for the towns with the Municipal Corporations Act, the Conservatives fifty years afterwards did with the Local Government Act for the counties.

That is to say, they remedied a state of gross inequality by a concession to democracy, because the inequality was obviously gross and unjust. And now the principle of self-government has been even more extended by the creation of Parish Councils. It is difficult to see how the self-government of localities can be carried much further than by the adoption of such parochial centres of authority—organized down to the very smallest divisions and sections of the rural communities. Parochial self-government is another concession to the democratic idea of the people's affairs being managed and controlled by the people themselves in their own localities. It would be impossible to discover for the purpose of self-government any fraction or subdivisions of a community more minute or microscopic than the parochial unit. The Conservatives and their henchmen, the Lords, have admitted that this concession is a legitimate concession to a legitimate demand for fuller powers of self-government on the part of a people advancing in education, and, as no sane person denies, becoming day by day more fitted to exercise the fullest development of Local Government that can be reasonably claimed.

III.

We, therefore, may assert with truth and justice, in the solemn hours that are coming, that the Conservative Party—and the Lords who have just passed the Parish Council Bill—have not been deaf to the claims of the Democracy so long as they were fair and legitimate. It is only when Democracy bursts all bounds and threatens

to destroy Parliament in order to grasp supreme power for itself, so as to override all other classes in this Empire, that the Conservative Party and the Conservative Chamber, as they attack it, refuse to listen to their appeals or their threats. It is one thing to ask for self-government ; it is another to ask for the overthrow of a Parliamentary system. Whatever may betide this question, the Conservative Party can say with a clear conscience that they have gone to the extremest limits of political consistency in order to conciliate the Democratic party.

PART V.

I.

Well, then, the House of Lords is finally abolished. It is all over, I will assume peacefully—not a bone has been broken—and a Unicameran Government is safely enthroned in all its glory on its ruins. Frivolous, careless, heartless, as we are said to have become as a nation under the new “Spirit of the Age,” the country, I suppose, has some moments at times of serious reflection. Let it reflect on this picture, now only in imagination, before it is too late. It is now only imagination. It may become a hideous reality. Well, let us stand in the midst of the ruined columns of what was once a portion of the English Constitution and reflect on the consequences of its downfall. What the verdict will be of generations of English yet to come when they read the page of history which tells them that their fathers refused to draw the sword to defend the throne of this Empire, can only be contemplated with bewilderment and humiliation. The very stones would rise and cry aloud against such a craven generation. But we need not dip into the future, the present is quite sufficient, and the present not only in this country but in countries far from our shores.

II.

What would be the effect of this change upon the

minds of foreign nations? It is very well to say with lofty insular scorn that continental opinion is nothing to us. But if we are not utterly destitute of all feeling of national self-respect, surely we must have some feeling of shame awakened in us when we picture the spectacle we should present to nations who had respected if they had not loved us. The feeling of those who had looked to England for light and leading in their political progress, and found their idol shattered and worthless, would be that of wonder and consternation, to say nothing of the dread of that infectious influence throughout all monarchical nations. Those who do not love us would point with the finger of scorn at the shattered pieces of our vaunted institutions, and hail this ruin with rejoicing and contempt. Every Constitutionalist in Europe would feel sick at heart at the breaking up of a political system that he had learnt to revere. Every revolutionist would take courage, and rejoice that the downfall of the English system at the summons of the people, might shake every throne in Europe, and bring his evil hopes nearer their fulfilment. And what of India? It is just possible the enlightened statesmen of the New Era would give back that great Dependency to its Native Princes—to be again the victim of mis-rule, religious feud and massacres, corruption, and oppression, and probably a prey to Russian aggression. If surrender however, was not their policy, would the Indian Princes who have accepted with only a sullen submission the sway of the Sovereign of England as Empress of India, submit for one moment to the rule of a country whose government was the outgrowth of a day—a

mushroom government—without the traditions, founded on centuries of power which they had felt and bowed before, of the old dominion, and which would possess what in the eyes of the Native Princes in India, from Comorin to the Himalayas, would be taken as a fatal weakness — uncertainty, and instability in its system? India, if it was not surrendered, would have to be re-conquered.

III.

England is, then, to embark on an experiment of Government which has never been tried in the states of the old world, except in the case of a short period during the French Revolution, and in England about 1656. But neither in France nor in England did the experiment succeed and it vanished from the uncongenial soil. It is true that in the Hellenic kingdom the Parliamentary system is unicameral, and it is also true that the Scandinavian Constitution of 1814, provided two of the northern Scandinavian States, Norway and Sweden, with Unicameral Parliament. But in both of these cases the unicameral legislature is checked and controlled by a royal Veto. In neither case can these States be quoted as affording precedents for Unicameral Government, as far as this particular argument is concerned, inasmuch as the Scandinavian and Greek Unicameral Parliaments are subject to the Veto of the Crown, and have never existed without it. Unicameral Government in England will brook neither King nor Royal Veto. It is an experiment which has not only never been really tried in

the old world, but has been scouted by American Republicans and has not found favour in the eyes of the fiercest and most genuine democracies in the world,—in our own Australian Colonies. No republic has ever existed without a President with some pretence of legislative power. But, the essence of our future legislative system is that it should have far more republican power than any republic ever knew, and brook a President as little as a King.

But what is this Unicameran Government to be for which the old system is to be sacrificed? A single chamber, which, based on universal suffrage (for naturally the suffrage would be extended to its very lowest limits as soon as Democracy came into power), would have to carry out the behests and mandates (for mandates they would be), of the lower electoral classes, down to the very dregs of the population, whose numbers would swamp the voting power of those classes who would represent the wealth as well as the best educated intelligence in the Empire, and who were therefore the safest guarantees for the stability and peaceful progress of the nation. In establishing such a Chamber Mr. Morley would set at defiance the teaching of Stuart Mill, an authority to whom, I imagine, all Liberals, at any rate,—will bow. Mill laid down emphatically the doctrine that education and intelligence, in matters of the suffrage, must never be subordinated to the brute force of mere numbers. Yet mere numbers, overwhelming education and intelligence, would be the basis in which Mr. Morley's Unicameran Government, elected by universal suffrage would inevitably

rest. In such a Chamber based on this suffrage, without the control of any other legislative authority whatever, there would be absolutely no obstacle to the utter confiscation of all the property of those whose property is a sin in the eyes of the lower democracy, if this uncontrolled House of Democrats so wished. There is to be literally no appeal from any measure, however monstrous in the eyes of the whole civilized world, however abominable and atrocious it may be. There is to be no appeal against the most monstrous tyranny, the vilest oppression, the most cruel legislation—the Single Chamber is to be omnipotent. Its will is to be final, and laws, which for capricious persecution and cruelty might put in the shade an Eastern Pachalik, may be passed without the slightest power of resistance or appeal from the ruined classes who would have no political status or influence in the Chamber or the country against this one despotic autocratic assembly. Democracies are generally warlike, and a gust of Democratic passion might hurl the country into war with foreign powers, which a little cool reflection or brief moment of calm consideration, interposed in a moment of national excitement by the action of a Second Chamber, might avoid. This Chamber will be composed of the delegates of caucuses, acting as lifeless, conscienceless machines, not as the free representatives of the old system, but as the mere tools of intriguing, intimidating combinations—slaves, and paid hirelings, as they would soon be, of party combinations, formed to send them to this Single Chamber ; to vote as they are bid, and as they are paid to vote ! And could any reasonable being

doubt what these delegates would be hired and ordered to vote for? To plunder the rich, to impoverish the interests of the classes they detest, to put all burdens on the wealth-possessing community, beyond their fair share, and none, if possible, on the backs of the democratic electorate; to ruin the Churches and probably religion (the Chapel would soon follow the Church—and vanish); to remember that their own interests, in the name of democratic impartiality, are to be preferred to all others. A machine copied from 'Trades' Unionism—with all its tyranny, its violence,—in its worst form, destroying individuality to obtain brute power (not forgetting for one moment the good attributes of Trade Unionism if legitimately used,—such as the assertion of the right of combination, the protection of labour against the oppression of capital)—a form of Trades' Unionism, as a parliamentary machine, would be the model in which the future caucuses would shape their government—despotism and organised tyranny. Mr. Herbert Spencer has pointed out that the wider and deeper the franchise amongst the lower masses the greater must be, not only the chance—but the danger—of a suppression of individuality—and the restriction of individual liberty. His warnings have been verified with unpleasant rapidity. Individuality of action, would be destroyed wherever it was possible. No better illustration of Democratic legislation in that character could be found than in the course adopted by the Democratic Government with regard to the "Employers' Liability Bill." The Lords—the oppressors of the people!

proposed that the working-man should have the right, in the exercise of his individual liberty, to go outside the "Act," if he so pleased, and make, if he thought he could do so, a better bargain than he would get under the "Act." "The enemy of the people" said, "allow the working-man to make his own bargain in his own interests as he thinks best;" the Democrat said to the working-man, "No! You shall do as we order you. The 'Act' shall be compulsory, or you shall not have the 'Act' at all." The Democrats, therefore, refused to allow the working-man freedom of contract, which the Lords asked in his behalf, and proposed to make the "Act" compulsory. That is the spirit in which Democratic legislation is to be conceived in the future. Let us reverse the case I have just quoted. If the Lords had proposed to make the clause in the "Employers' Liability Act" compulsory, and the Democrats had proposed to give freedom of contract to the working-man, and the Lords had opposed it, what a tempest of indignation and fury would have thundered at the doors of the Lords Chamber! What oceans of declamation would have been poured forth against the tyranny of the Lords, the oppression of the working man, against that hardness of heart on the part of the Lords, who were once more showing their rooted hatred for the people! And this illustration is a very fair one of the character of the tyranny of Democratic legislation, and a warning to those who believe that the People themselves are likely to fare better in the hands of the Democrats than in the hands of the present Constitutional parties.

IV.

If the Finance Bill (usually styled in pre-democratic times the Budget), which was so skilfully piloted through the Commons by the learned Attorney General, with the able assistance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is to be taken as a specimen of the class legislation to which even now the landed and propertied interests of this country can be subjected to, we can only too easily see what would be the fate of these interests if the proletariat were really to succeed in establishing a Unicameral Government, which would exist to levy taxation according to the wants and mandates of the democracy. The democrats are proud of their Finance Bill, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his financial adjutant, the Attorney General, has been fêted in celebration of their triumph. If the democrats are proud of their Bill and their Chancellor of the Exchequer, the constitutionalists have reason to be, if not proud of them, grateful to them for the lesson they have taught the world. Nothing could well be more opportune than the late Finance Bill. The note of warning is sounded at a moment when it is important to bring home to the minds of the people of England what they are threatened with. To shift the burden of taxation from the shoulders of the people on to the shoulders of those who can bear it is the burden of the lay of the democrats who have carried a Finance Bill which will act with ruinous unfairness and harshness on certain classes. To talk of shifting those burdens from one class to another so as to equalize the taxation is an admirable profession. In the mouths of the Democrats

it is simply a jargon to cover the flimsily disguised policy of the confiscation of the property of certain classes in order to destroy them as political opponents. To resent with extreme measures fair, though heavy imposts, is senseless. But are the death duties fair? The death duties in this democratic Budget will drive the owners of many of those properties either out of their estates, or at the least oppress them with burdens a thousand times greater than, compared especially with the lower classes, they ought in justice to bear. Fiscal tyranny is now to be used as a kind of political dynamite to destroy political classes, to break up all large landed estates for political objects, to put an end to territorial influences, to ruin property for partizan purposes. This is the policy of English statesmanship at the end of the nineteenth century. When Sir Robert Peel repealed the Corn Laws, he injured, if he did not ruin, the agricultural interests, but is there a sane man who would venture to say that Sir Robert Peel opened the ports of England to foreign grain, not to save England from an impending crisis, not to give a vast population cheaper food, but to gratify a partizan hatred, and to revenge himself on a political class? Contrast the old statesmanship with the new. Are the death duties fair taxation? It is admitted that the amount payable in many cases under this arrangement of the death duties will be at least for four or five years the rental of the estate in which these duties will be levied. If you deprive a possessor of an estate of his whole rental for four or five years, I submit that such legislation is not taxation, but a complete

confiscation of the whole rental of that property for four or five years. I submit that this is not taxation, but spoliation and robbery of a class—not for the benefit of the nation—but to break up a political class for party purposes. We may well ask : if this is so now, what have we to look forward to when a Unicameran Government is in power ?

At first sight it would, perhaps, appear as if the abolition of the Chamber which has only the power to reject—but not to alter—a Money Bill sent from the Commons, and the creation of a Single Chamber for general purposes of legislation would not produce any very great disturbance or alteration in the financial system as it exists at this time—and which is, for all practical purposes, “Unicameran” so far as finances are in question. No doubt the system is now financially “Unicameran.” But, still, if the adoption of the Unicameran system for general legislation, as well as financial, did not essentially alter the actual machinery for imposing taxes and raising revenue, the abolition of the Second Chamber, although it had no practical control over taxation in theory, would very materially affect—not the methods—that would be impossible,—but the motives and causes which—some directly and some indirectly—contribute to guide the financial policy of the country. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that the House of Lords exercises no influence over the taxation of the people. Although the Commons have absolute power in matters of finance technically, the influence of the Upper House is felt—and felt to a far greater degree

than is generally acknowledged, upon the opinions and votes of the constituencies through the peculiar influence which it possesses owing to the attributes of its functions, its calmness, its dignity, and, above all, that complete independence, which the Commons do not possess, and which gives that indefinable power and inestimable value, in a manner difficult to describe and to a degree impossible to gauge, which must always distinguish an opinion given under fear of a constituency, from an opinion absolutely independent of all disturbing influences and unbiassed by any of these considerations of the consequences of that opinion, which must always weigh on the minds and warp the judgments of the members of the Lower House. Besides this, the debates of the Upper House have this additional value,—which makes them, on occasions of great discussions, possess almost greater authority in guiding opinion and convincing the educated intelligence of the country than the debates in the Commons,—that their Councils are, even more than in the Commons, the deliberations of veteran statesmen and the most experienced leaders of the time. Expenditure depends upon policy. Policy guides taxation. Policy rules the lines on which revenue is raised,—that is to say, it determines on what class the imposts should be placed, on what interests the burden should be laid. Policy regulates the character—the bias—the justice or the iniquity of taxation. And who will deny that the House of Lords whatever may be its technical powers over finance, does influence the general policy of the nation? If the Lords cannot amend a Money Bill they can alter or influence

the policy which inspires the Bill. They can call the attention of the country to misguided policy or to ruinous statesmanship. In its debates on great state questions, such as foreign policy, for instance, the influence of the Upper House has always been undeniably great. The debates, from the eloquence—the high standard of intellectual excellence requisite to command attention in those deliberations, affect the mind of the nation to an extent hardly less powerful than those of the Commons. They help to shape the policy of the nation which shapes the finance of the Lower House. If, then, you abolish the Upper Chamber, you abolish an influence most valuable of its kind, which assuredly affects finance. An unchecked proletariat Chamber would possess both the power of guiding the policy of the country as well as the power over its purse. It would be both the controller and the originator both of of finance and policy. If the taxing power in the Lower House is the mainspring in the parliamentary watch, the guidance of the Upper House, in matters of policy, acts, in some measure,—and in a much greater measure than the Liberals care to allow—as the regulator in that instrument of Government. Abolish the regulator and the mainspring would lose a valuable control and an appreciable guide in time of disturbance as well as in times of quiet. In losing this regulating control Unicameran finance would take the bit between its teeth and run riot, and would probably soon prove the soundness of the contention that although Unicameran Government will not necessarily alter the machinery of taxation, it

will introduce entirely new policies, based on successful revolution, which would influence finance in a disastrous degree, and make the void created by the sinking of the Lords more obvious and more regretted hour by hour, until the very hottest Constitutionalists would pray for another Cromwell to arise—not perhaps, the Cromwell of 1649, but the Cromwell of 1653. Cromwell, after six years' experience of Unicameran Government, turned the Unicameran gentry, bag and baggage, with their "Bauble," into the streets. Will history repeat itself? Or are its teachings, with eternal sameness to be ever as "pearls before swine?"

We have seen already with dread and alarm how a new policy affects finance, and have had an edifying lesson of the way in which under a democratic administration of finance, taxation, instead of being a legitimate instrument for providing the revenue of a nation, by a distribution of the incidence of the necessary imposts over the various interests of the community, as equitable and fair as political human nature will permit, is to be used as a weapon for the pursuance of a policy which has for its object the destruction of political opponents, the gratification of personal spite and vindictiveness, and can become, only too readily, a facile instrument of political injustice and oppression. What, after all, is the active living policy that guides so obviously the Chancellor of the Exchequer's political finance? It is the policy to make the State the owner of all property,—the "State" in the future, be it remembered, being in the uncontrolled hands of the Chief of the Democratic majority for the time being, in a Single

Assembly. All individual ownership will cease, and will be merged into the ownership of the State. How this can be effected, without the most tyrannical usurpation of private rights, without the most piratical robbery of all personal and individual rights of possession of property, will defy all ingenuity of explanation. Can this be tolerated? Sir Robert Peel may speak again and say, "Will such tyranny be borne? Never."

V.

Again, if Unicameral system of Government is adopted, how is an administration to be formed? The Duke of Wellington asked in a political crisis, "How is the King's Government to be carried on?" What if there is to be no King? How can a Government, not only be carried on, but formed? If there is to be no King or Chief Magistrate—no President even—no Head of the State—who is technically to form a Ministry? It is possible that the Prime Minister, who would possess, we may suppose, the power of selecting his subordinate colleagues, who would be his slaves, and who would, when made the Chief Minister, possess the uncontrolled authority of a dictator over them, and the Chamber, and the Country, might be chosen by some process of election by the Chamber itself. Of this process we are told nothing, we know nothing. But we can guess everything—and it requires but little prescience to know the intrigues, the corruption, the venality, the degradation of the politicians, the qualifications which will best befit a Minister for the post, and the character of the man who would hold it.—What

would be the legislation of such a Ministry, such a Chamber, such an Electorate, to which the propertied classes of this country would be exposed? It requires but little reflection for even the most temperate and least impulsive temperament to see that it would be an impossibility for the threatened political parties to submit to such a government.

VI

Political prophecy is generally as futile as it is foolish, but it does not require the gift of prophecy to predict the complete change that would come over and darken all the happiest conditions of English social life which had hitherto distinguished us beyond most other civilized communities, if the aims and objects of political life were so completely transformed as they would be when elections became deadly struggles for autocratic power in a Unicameran Government, superseding the struggles for Constitutional supremacy in a system such as we possess now, where the passions of the elective and popular chamber, however violent and dangerous, were controlled and modified by the calmer influences of a non-elective Legislative Authority. The character of English life, social and political, would be completely changed.

South American States were not usually accepted as models of good government, nor were the populations supposed to be patterns of idyllic contentment and docility. But, if Unicameran Government is foisted upon the nation we shall find ourselves entering upon such an era of disturbance as only South America, in its worst days, could rival. County Councils and Parish

Councils, for good or for evil, will, as it is, keep the country in a perpetual ferment of petty electioneering agitation. But what would that state of unrest be compared with the fever of politics which would run through the body of the nation when each Parliamentary election was to give, not the reins of administration to a Constitutional Minister, but the power of a Dictator, as the head of a faction, to the chief of the section which won the day? And when the election was ended, would peace ensue? These contests would not be elections, in our acceptance of the word. They would soon become armed conflicts, with the continual prospect of civil war ever before the country. A chronic state of alarm, of mistrust, of fear, would keep the nation in ruinous unrest. Trade would inevitably wither and die in such an atmosphere of dread and threatening. Revenue would of course diminish because the sources of it would be dried up; and the end of it would only be one thing—National bankruptcy. Is this picture overdrawn? Let those who think so show how it would be possible to be otherwise—if the Chamber was to be without a President or Head of the State outside the Chamber—or any controlling power—able to control its extravagances and to curb the factions. I am dealing, I need not say, with the system of Government proposed by the National Liberal Association, and my remarks from beginning to end are based on the resolution of that meeting, speaking in the name of the whole Liberal party of this country. The Chamber itself would be broken up into a number of turbulent factions, each with a pretender at its head and a

following in the country, more or less considerable, and ravenous for the loot of the Treasury, which would fall to the winners. As the chief of the ruling faction would be the dictator of his country and his Parliament, would anyone believe, when such supreme absolute personal power is the prize of the elections, they will be carried on upon the model of Constitutional England—peacefully and legally—and not upon the model of a South American State? People will answer according to their knowledge of human and political nature and their reading of history. But would any one on reflection, venture to believe that considering the character of the contesting factions and their leaders with their frequent elections, there could be peace in England? If the Government is Unicameran, and its chief the possessor of absolute power, this unfortunate country would pass from its happy tranquillity into a period of continuous ever-bubbling turmoil, to which the cauldron of South American politics would be but the gentle simmering of a tea-cup. We know what South American politics were. Does the English tradesman who loves peace, wish to find every two or three months, on his breakfast table, an application for his vote, with, probably, an additional request to him to look up his drill, and to clean his rifle and get his cartridges from the stores? South American elections were generally accompanied by conflicts of armed bodies. Do we wish to see the England of our day transformed into the condition of the restless discontented nations, that under the Equator were accustomed to a revolution, with the regularity of the “revolution” of the

earth round the sun—once a year? Are we really to be so senseless as to plunge the country into a cycle of countless years of sleeplessness and unrest? In South America political forces, like the volcanic agencies in that disturbed soil, were never at rest, always active, always threatening. There was no rest, no breathing time, no repose. A mere truce marked the advent or exit of a party, even if they were not heralded or saluted by the clash of arms. In many cases the polling booth was a barricade, and a change of Ministry was made at the point of the bayonet. Movimentos and Pronunciamentos took the place of the peaceful return of the writ to Mr. Speaker. And then to the fallen Minister it was “*Væ victis*” with a vengeance! The defeated Ministers of the “late Government” often disappeared to lament their defeat, not on the comfortable benches of the opposition, as in England, but on the stones of a prison floor, manacled and fettered to the neck, where they had leisure to indulge in pleasing meditation on the fickleness of fortune, and their own chances of being shot—without trial—before the sun went down. Is the future history of England to be as a history of a South American State? Assuredly the forward step to such a catastrophe will be taken when a paramount Chamber with a Parliamentary Dictatorship, is our Parliamentary system, where every election would be the scene of different contending sections scrambling for supreme power in the State and ready to go to extreme measures to win the prize, recruited by the Democratic suffrage from the lowest ranks, led by unscrupulous leaders to whom supreme power, if only for a few months, made the

difference between wealth and poverty, to the ruin of the peace of the country and the destruction of its prosperity, which depends upon that peace.

VII.

Every measure passed by this proletariat Chamber is to be law at once. Whether the measure is passed in a gust of passion or not it is to be the law of the land as soon as the majority of the Chamber have so willed it. If two years ago Unicameran Government had been in existence, Home Rule might have been imposed at this moment on the neck of Irish Loyalists—without a check—and the Democracy might have scored their first great victory, though not a bloodless one, over the Loyalists of the Sister Island—and Irish Loyalists would do well to remember that if Unicameran Government takes the place of the House of Lords, and Home Rule should come to the front again, there will be no House of Lords then to stand between them and oppression, and nothing, indeed, save their own strong arms and determined hearts. To abolish the Lords is to give Home Rule to Ireland. If indeed, nothing could prove the value of the House of Lords more clearly than its action in rejecting Home Rule, it is equally certain that nothing would show so well how these Democratic attacks should be met in this country as the example of the Northern Loyalists in the Sister Island—who, if the Peers had by any chance passed this revolutionary measure, were prepared to constitute themselves a House of Lords in their own fashion, in their own

Province, and would have undertaken the duties of that House in another shape, and would have summarily rejected the Bill, if it appeared in Ulster, with the point of the bayonet.

VIII.

The Unicameran Government then, being unchecked and entirely at the mercy and bidding of the lowest electoral classes, would be a system to which we would not submit. Even if we were madmen enough to allow the House of Lords and Throne to be destroyed, we would not submit to the form of government which is to take its place. And why then are we to have this Unicameran Government thrust upon us? Because the Spirit of the Age requires it. But what is this Spirit of the Age? And why are we to bow our head before it? Let us see what it is. Are we to be thankful for it? Why should we? We are told that the Spirit has been upon us for the last three decades, that its influence is all-pervading, that it has altered the whole mind and character of the nation—that we must bow to it, and acknowledge it as irresistible. But what has the Spirit of the Age effected since it came upon us? Has the nation advanced or retrograded under its influences during the last thirty years? It is not an exaggerated pessimism to say that in every way in which a country can retrograde England has retrograded under the influence of this democratic advance. In art and science where are the men comparable to the leading scientists of the pre-democratic period—in literature

what have we to compare to Macaulay, to Thackeray, Dickens, and a host of others? Decadence and democracy have appeared at one and the same time. Our trade is falling into other hands, and our merchant navy is manned three-fourths by foreign sailors—great industries are falling off before the superior excellence of the rival countries abroad. Agriculture is a vanishing—if not a vanished—industry. Once the staple industry of the country—and now!—wheat selling at 18 shillings, and the cost of production to the farmer remains at 44 shillings, or as nearly as possible the same cost as it was when, in the time of the war with France, wheat was selling at 104 shillings! Whatever military credit or reputation we have abroad, is the capital we laid up in olden times—and on which we are now trading. We are trading upon Waterloo and Trafalgar in the days of the Monarchy, and the heroism of our troops in the Indian Mutiny of the Sepoy Army. What could be stronger symptom of the decadence of the nation than disaster on the field? We have had one military success in the East—the Egyptian Campaign, which was darkened, minimised, ruined, by the abandonment of the Soudan as soon as we had conquered it—to set against the Majuba Hills, Maiwands, the Isandulas, which have ushered in the march of the glorious Democracy. Is this a retrogression, or an advance? Where are the statesmen now who will be placed within a year's march of the Peels and Cannings, Russells, Palmerstons, and a long and glorious roll of statesmen such as they? We have indeed amongst us

the veteran leader of the Liberal Party—now the Chief of the Democratic Party—but the Gladstone of the days when he served in Liberal Ministries more than thirty years ago, is not the Gladstone of 1894—Democracy has changed him from the champion of Free Trade, the defender of the Church, the eloquent foe of Bourbon tyranny in the South of Italy, into the Irish Home Ruler, the foe to Established Churches, the traitor to the Constitution, the destroyer of the oldest branch of the Legislature. It is not to be wondered at that the statesman who left the hero Gordon to perish at Khartoum is now the statesman who bequeathed as his departing legacy to his country the traitor's duty to destroy the constitution and throne of his country. And this conversion of a noble mind has been one of the greatest triumphs of the Democratic Spirit of the Age! And what of English statesmanship apart from Mr. Gladstone? Has that increased the prosperity of this country? Thirty years ago England was a tranquil country, peaceful, without a symptom of internal danger. Surely the peace of England ought to be the end and aim of English statesmanship! Where has it landed us now? Where has this Democratic statesmanship led us to? To the very limits of a position from which there can be no escape but through bloodshed or disgrace. The statesmen of the Democracy have succeeded in placing the peace of England in jeopardy, by trying to destroy what they should not permit to be destroyed, and to humiliate and destroy a party as brave and as determined as themselves. This is the result of thirty years of this Spirit of the Age statesmanship. These Democratic

statesmen, acting in the Spirit of the Age, now dare us to the conflict. Can we refuse their challenge? But if we do take up the gauntlet, do they know what that answer means? When the shadow of the Crimean war was darkening the homes of England, Mr. Bright thrilled every heart in England when he said, "You may, even now, hear the beating of the wings of the Angel of Death throughout the land." Shall we ever hear the wings of the Angel of Death fluttering again over our homes, to be made desolate, not in conflict with a foreign enemy, but in a struggle between brothers?

PART VI.

I.

We see now, I hope, clearly the dangers to the Crown and the institutions we live under from this attack on the House of Lords. If the electorate refuse to send a majority to support the revolutionary Minister,—so much the better,—*Cadit quæstio*. But if the electorate in a moment of madness give their decision in favour of a revolution the time will have come for Loyalists to consider how best to meet the crisis. We even now begin to realize the threats to which we have been subjected, and to which we have for so long submitted with patience and forbearance—we have already seen the consequences of submission to them. It is time for us even now to turn and to declare what we, who are Loyalists, intend to do. Should certain contingencies arise, if we are smitten on one cheek, we have no intention of turning the other to the smiter. We intend to defend the rights of the throne and the powers of the House of Lords. If the throne is attacked we will defend it. If those who wish to destroy these institutions continue to march onward, we will say to them, “Thus far, and no farther!” In what would happen after this warning, the onus of responsibility would rest on the shoulders of those who disregarded it. We are the attacked party. We defend ourselves. The onus rests on the aggressor, not on the defender.

This, of course, is Civil War. In all wars the responsibility rests on those who provoke them. The very name of Civil war is so odious, that no civilized being can utter it without a shudder. If war—foreign war, on the justest of grounds, on the most patriotic of issues, in defence of one's own country, is, even then, an evil which our human intelligence can barely reconcile with the goodness and mercy of Providence, how much greater the curse, how much more appalling will be the responsibility which will rest on the heads of those who are trying to light up a war between Englishmen and Englishmen—on English soil, by forcing thousands of Englishmen in defence of what they hold most dear, to face those horrors from which their very nature recoils, in order to avoid evils even greater, if that were possible, than the calamity of war itself. If Civil war ever takes place, such a responsibility will rest on the heads of the Democrats.

II.

Let us clearly and distinctly understand what is the cause for which we are going to contend.

We believe that the Constitution as it exists now—and has existed for centuries—consisting of King, Lords, and Commons, is still the system of Government best adapted to the character of the vast majority of the English people.

We hold that the abolition of the Upper House must eventually involve the downfall of the monarchical system.

We say that the abolition of the Upper House would lead to the concentration of all the powers of

government in the grasp of one single Chamber absolutely uncontrolled.

We hold that such a concentration of power would constitute a Democratic Dictatorship of the most tyrannical kind.

We hold that such a Dictatorship would be necessarily incompatible not only with the existence of the Monarchy but with the freedom of the people, and the good and impartial government of all classes.

We further state that to deprive the Upper House of its veto is practically the same as to abolish the House altogether, as it would degrade this portion of the Legislature to a powerless nonentity. The Upper House could no more exist without a veto than the human body could live after the heart had ceased to beat.

We affirm not only that the usurpation of uncontrolled power by the single chamber, would place in the hands of the leader of the majority in it the despotic powers of a dictator, but that such a dictatorship would be fatal to the liberties of the people. In such hands we believe that legislation would be unjust, and vindictive, and oppressive. We hold that class interest would predominate to such a degree that only the interests of one class would be considered and that class would be embued with a determination to destroy the interests of other classes without any regard to equality of rights, or justice of claims. The existence of such a democratic and despotic single chamber would be the death blow of political justice toward those parties who have hitherto opposed its creation. We believe that the democratic tyranny of a single chamber, without control or check,

would be a tyranny far more formidable and injurious to every section of the people than the worst kingly tyranny in the days of the Stuart dynasty. We say that this tyranny is now threatened us, and that it is as much to oppose this threatened tyranny that is to come from democratic autocracy as to defend the House of Lords as it is, that we enter the field.

We say that every well-wisher to the good government of his country will approve reforms of a radical kind in the Upper House, but we hold that no such reforms would be accepted by the democrats because they would strengthen, rather than weaken, the House which stands between them and paramount power which they have announced it is their object to attain.

We say that we will not submit to the despotic tyranny of a single Chamber in substitution for the Upper House and the Crown, and that we, as Loyalists, will resist this attack with all our energies, at the cost of our possessions, and at the sacrifice of our lives.

That should be our creed and our war cry.

PART VII.

I.

What will be the attitude of the Liberal Party in the coming conflict? We know the duty of the Conservative Party—and they will do it—but what will the Liberal party do? It is a momentous question. It may perhaps be best answered by another question. Will the Liberals vote and act as their fathers, the old Whig Party, would have voted and acted—or will they side with the Democrat? If the Liberals are the true successors and representatives of the Whig Party, they will cast in their lot with the Constitutional Party; and this union between the successors of the Whigs and the descendants of the old Tories would show how the two great political parties, adversaries for so many centuries, foes of the bitterest type, are forced into alliance and sympathy against a modern political force, which would have been opposed as strongly by the Whig as by the Tory of a more ancient epoch. What has been the old Whig Policy? The lines of the policy of the great Whig Party stand out sharp and clearly defined since the Revolution of 1642, and the days of 1688. That party then took to itself the guardianship of the interests of the People against the oppression of Parliament as well as of the Crown. It stood between the Crown and the People—to safeguard the People—but with no hostility to the Throne. The policy of the Whigs,

after the Restoration, and after having purged and purified the Throne from its worst attributes, by the Parliamentary war, was devoted to strengthening the Throne rather than weakening it, and to reforming rather than destroying the political system. From the Revolution, from the Restoration, to the present date it has often been the object of the Whigs to curtail the power of the Crown, but it has never been the avowed object of the Whig Party to endanger the existence of the Throne, even when it was necessary to defend the claims of the People as strongly as in 1832. Much less would the policy of the old Whig Party sanction an attack by the People on the Upper Branch of the Legislature, when there was not the slightest pretext for supposing that a single right, or liberty of the People, was in danger at the hands of the Peers. The Whigs of the Revolution were true to the popular cause, but they were also true to the Throne as well. The Liberals claim to be the successors of the Whigs, and the Whigs claim, rightly or wrongly—as Whigs or Tories may choose to assert—to have made the Constitution what it is. Whigs prided themselves, and great historians, like Macaulay, have supported them in their proud assumption, that they were the sole rightful depositaries of the traditions of the Great Revolution. They were the rightful guardians of the liberties of the nation as handed down to them in trust by their fathers who made the Revolution. Whig tradition boasts that every concession won for the People these last two centuries was a victory of the Whigs. We may grant all these assumptions—and the more we admit them the more clear be-

comes the path of duty which the Liberals, as sons of the old Whigs, ought to take, if they are true to their inheritance of Whig principles. They should separate themselves from the Democrats as from a pestilence. Contrast the Whigs of the earlier part of this century—or the end of the last—with the Democrat of to-day. Ask if the Whig of that epoch could have one single aim in common with the Democrat. Nor is the Democracy of to-day of the same character or type as the People of the past. If it is true that there is not a wider gulf between the Whig of the Regency and the Liberal of to-day than there was between the Whig and the Tory of that date, it is equally certain that there is the same complete difference, diversity of character, and marked variation of type and temperament, between the People of those days and the Democracy of 1894.

II.

Contrast the aims and objects of the Democrats and the Whigs—the people and the Democracy—the two great political parties of the two periods? The old Whig party spoke as Tribunes of the People—for the popular cause. But these popular causes and their aims—political adversaries may now admit—were noble and patriotic, and never disloyal. No Whig statesman ever threatened the Throne, or, even with all his passion for popular rights, ever proposed that the Commons should be paramount over the Crown. The Democrats in the Ministerial benches do both of these things. What are the Tribunes of the People clamouring for now? Each of these parties is now proceeding upon perfectly different

lines to the attainment of perfectly different ends. The "People" of ninety years ago had absolutely opposite ends in view to those of to-day's Democracy? Can any one say that, judged by the old standard of English politics, the Tribunes of the "Democracy" are asking for what is patriotic or loyal? Radicalism in 1810, let us say, which assumed to speak for the People, claimed for them, as law-abiding masses, political rights which could not long be deferred, and political aspirations which could not be ignored. At this distance of time, even Tory prejudices may give way, and we may allow that the voice of the people was often the voice of justice and liberty. The Tribunes of the people in those days could not speak with freedom of speech, except often only at the peril of their persons, or even their lives. The political consciences and skins of those in power in those days were much more tender than they are in these days. In confronting abuses, in defending the oppressed, the People's Tribune often dared much, and suffered much. Sir Francis Burdett went to the Tower for offences which would be ridiculed in these times. Wilkes went to ignominious punishment for the very heinous crime of having in the celebrated No. 45 of the *North Briton* ventured to suggest that his august and venerated Sovereign was guilty of a slight deflection from the paths of absolute truthfulness (And where, of all places? In the King's Speech, in which, probably, the King had not written one syllable). And yet for this awful crime the *North Briton* was ordered to be burnt by the hangman. And now we allow too much latitude. However lamentable it would be to

see any attempt to stifle free speech, we may doubt whether, when the Democrat Minister, without danger to his liberty, or his life, is permitted with a full assurance of his perfect safety and immunity from any kind of peril for any outspoken treason to the Throne, to try to raise the masses in revolt against our Constitution and the Crown, the reasonable limits of free speech have not been reached, and passed.

III.

Tories—or Conservatives—now that the unfairness of party bias is buried in the past, can admit that the People's voice in those days was a noble voice; and at times was raised for the noblest ends. Lord Brougham, the great Tribune of the People in the early part of the century, declared that "in the voice of the people you may "hear the thunder of the Almighty." *Vox populi vox dei*. No doubt this grand apostrophe was true, with the reservation that it is only when the People are crying aloud for what is just and free and ennobling, and reasonable, as an intelligent, law-fearing people, that the "thunder of the Almighty could be heard." The People of those days, instead of crying for the overthrow of a Throne and a Constitution, which was the free and noble work of the statesmanship of ages, cried aloud for cheaper food for their children—for fairer wages for the sweat of their brow—which would keep them from that state of starvation in which the close of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 found the lower masses of the population—a condition of national distress of which we in these days can form no true

conception. High prices—low wages—no employment for labour—the people, half-starving, cried aloud for mercy—they cried for reform, not to overthrow the Institutions of their Country, but to reform them, in order to obtain some sort of redress, which might give them some chance of happier existences in this world. And not only so—the People and their leaders did not stop short at those boundaries which define purely political questions from those which appeal to the higher feelings of our common humanity. They went further. They sought to adorn the Statute book of England with acts which were not merely political or actuated by party motives, but by acts which came from the heart as well as the brain of Liberal statesmanship—from the heart of the philanthropist as well as the brain of the politician. If ever the thunder of the Almighty might be said to have been heard in the voice of the people, assuredly it may have been when in the mouths of Wilberforce, of Clarkson, of Brougham, it demanded the ending of that traffic in human lives which blotted our history for so long,—and told the African slave to be free? When the voice of the people spoke in the name of humanity, the thunder of the Almighty may have been heard. Would the thunder of the Almighty be heard in the voice of the Democrat to-day, crying—not for liberty to the People, who are free—not for the betterment of humanity, not for the improvement of the well-being of the toiling millions—or of the poor whose state appeals more piteously to our eyes and humanity every day, and on every side of our path—but crying for a Revolution which must darken every home in England

with the shadow of Civil War? Would the thunder of the Almighty be heard in the voice of a democracy clamouring for the destruction of the Constitution and the overthrow of a Crown, which for centuries has never threatened to encroach upon the liberties of the people—or stood in the way of the welfare and happiness, social or political, of the nation?

IV.

Contrast, then, the People of those days and the Democracy of the present day. It is of great importance to show that the Democrats of to-day have nothing in common with the Radicals, or Liberals, or Whigs of old. Even in those days of provocation, in the earlier years of the nineteenth century, in their sheer distress—in their want of food—the People,—bitter as they were against the Tory party and the Tory administrations—even then the People stayed their anger before it reached the Throne. Riots there were—and frequent—but against Tory administration, and not against the Crown. The People sought to destroy a Party and a Ministry, but never the Parliamentary system or the Crown. However much the Parliament or the Parliamentary majorities in it, were slow to recognize their claims—with starvation,—so often the parent and the justification of insurrection,—staring them in the face, the People spared the Crown. They asked for food, not for Unicameran Parliament—they asked for a wider suffrage—political justice—ampler means of obtaining a voice in the Councils of the Nation—not for a supremacy of the Commons—of the people—over the

Sovereign. Even in the dark political hours when their patience and endurance were racked to the very breaking point, they did not ask for Revolution, but for better government in the Parliamentary system as it was. And now ! The " People," who could, in those trying days, under every provocation, refrain from attacking the Sovereign, are now, as a Democracy, proceeding to overthrow the Parliamentary system of the country—and then the Crown—without one single grievance against them—with fulness and plenty in their homes—with cheap food, liberty, and more than liberty—with every comfort within the means of the lower masses—to overthrow a Constitution in these days of almost perfect prosperity in comparison with those old days of trial and temptation—to overthrow a Crown which in their most passionate hours they left unmolested. And why is there now to be this Revolution ? Not for one single encroachment upon the people's freedom—not one single indictment of that nature can be brought against the Peers—or the Crown,—but in order, at the summons of Doctrinaires or Democratic Revolutionists, to place supreme autocratic power in the hands of the Commons, without any check upon them—or upon the use of the purse of the nation which would be at the disposal of the uncontrolled leader of the majority of the Commons. Would it be possible to find any political parties more strongly antagonistic or more widely separated than the People of the first portion of the century and the Democracy of 1894?

V.

We admit, therefore, in the fullest measure that the Whigs were foremost in their aspirations for the improvement of human happiness, the advancement of the people, the consolidation of English institutions based on justice to the varied interests of the country. The history of the Whig Party is the history of the People's struggles and triumphs. Be it so. Grant every claim the Whigs make. But what were those triumphs? They were battles fought and won by the great Whig champions and the Whig Party in the cause of progress and liberty, in order to strengthen the Throne by placing it on the basis of justice to the People of this country. Will the Liberals of to-day allow the work of the Whigs of yesterday to be swept away by the Democrat? That, indeed, is the vital question: Whigs, as Whigs write history, built up the Constitution as it is to-day. Democrats destroy it before their face. Will they tolerate it? How can the Liberal forget the creed of the Whigs, and destroy, what is, in fact, the boasted handiwork of his own progenitors? The Whig must be changed indeed to become the Democrat. In some instances the character of the so-called Whigs of the day has, indeed, undergone marked changes. It often happened that the Radical—violent when unfettered with the responsibility of office, was tamed by a seat on the Treasury Bench,—in other, and, no doubt, truer words, a politician, hot-headed and impetuous in defence or advocacy of causes in which he believed, became a Statesman, when a sense of the weighty responsibility of his duties was imposed upon him, more calm, more cautious perhaps, but, never-

theless, a high-minded and conscientious administrator of the Nation's affairs.

It may have been a little libellous to say—or sing—of the Whig as was sung of him by a contemporary wit :

“As bees on flowers alighting cease to hum,

“So Whigs when taking office soon grow dumb.”

But, in the case of the present descendant of the Whig, the reverse, and very much the reverse of the medal is the case. In these times the intoxication of office and its power seems to have inflamed still further the revolutionary passions of the Whig Ministers. Official responsibilities certainly have not softened the Philistinism of Mr. Morley, or drawn the teeth of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Each of these statesmen, when he left the freer benches of the opposition, seems to have shed the remainder of his Whig skin, and, with it, the remainder of his Whig principles, and developed — or degenerated — as soon as he had taken his seat on the Treasury benches, into a still more violent and uncurbed Democrat than before. But what will the Liberals who are still Whigs—and who will not follow these extreme leaders—decide to do?

On the support of one section of the Liberal Party we may count with confidence, the Liberal-Unionist section. That section is only too well aware that the abolition of the House of Lords means the success of Home Rule. Will they have given up their allegiance to their old party to save the country from Home Rule, and then allow the only barrier which exists to the

Home Rule, the House of Lords, to be swept away before their eyes? The same cause which led them to secede from the main body of Liberalism would make it imperative on them to oppose measures which would abolish the Legislature which was the instrument for rejecting Home Rule—to oppose which they themselves as Liberal-Unionists have transferred their support—temporarily if you will—to the Conservative Party. If so large a part—and perhaps the most influential portion in political weight—of the Liberal Party acted on the dictates of their consciences—not a very common occurrence—and left their party in order to defeat Home Rule, we may perhaps see another defection from the Liberal Party which will be an invaluable reinforcement to the Loyalist ranks. As one of the detached sections of the Liberal Party became “Liberal Unionists,” we may look forward, not without hope that another section of that party which though existing separately from the “Unionists,” and like the “Unionists,” true and loyal to the principles of Liberalism, will not tolerate as “Liberal Constitutionalists” the destruction of the Constitution, any more than “Liberal Unionists” would tolerate Home Rule.

VI.

Let the Liberals who are still Whigs, and not Revolutionists, reflect on the situation their country is placed in. Let them ask themselves whether if they wish to bear themselves as consistent Liberals, attached to Whig principles, they can follow their former leaders in the policy they are now placing before

the country. The whole mass of the Liberal Party is now invoked to substitute a Parliamentary dictatorship for the free Constitutional Parliament, which the Whigs for centuries past, with Sisyphean labours, have been creating. Their fathers have fought and bled and died for the very principles which they are asked to throw to the winds. If the Empire owes to the Whig Party the extension of its liberties—fruits of victories raised on soil watered with the blood of their Whig ancestors, if it owes freedom of speech—freedom of thought—the enlargement of the suffrage on which the latter part of the existence of Constitutional Government has flourished and borne good fruit—if it owes these benefits as largely to the Whigs as the Whigs have claimed, consistency and the fame of a great party at once demand that the Liberals, as descendants of the Whigs, should be foremost in the field to defend these rights of Parliament which their fathers fought and bled for, and which are now attacked by a sacrilegious band—and to guard the trust of the traditions of a great party from destruction. If this be so, can the Liberals who hold these traditions in trust from the Whigs, can they allow a new subversive power to rise in politics—a new principle, fatal to the existing Parliament, to be successful—a principle which would involve the supremacy, without control, of an absolutism of Government, which would be antagonistic to every principle for which his Whig forefathers, fought and which they won at the great Revolution. Of these the Whigs have always boasted themselves the only true and rightful guardians.

Will they be found trustworthy champions in the hour of danger? We will hope so. When the value of their trustworthiness is put to the test will they fail? Or will the Tories, after all, be found the truest defenders of Whig traditions and principles, in their noblest and most patriotic form, when the hour for action strikes?

VII.

If the Liberals would reflect for one moment they would see that, if Liberalism has had this great and preponderating share in consolidating a system of government in this country, which has never had an equal for freedom in the history of the world, they would be the very worst enemies to these institutions they had done so much to create, if they, as a revolutionary Democracy, voted for the uncontrolled despotism of a "paramount" Parliament, erected on the ruins of the Upper House and a kingless throne. Nothing, therefore, can be more clear than that to the Whig even more than to the Tory—to the Liberal even more than the Conservative—the duty must in honour rest to defend the principles of the Revolution, and guard the traditions of 1646, as well as of 1688. The more the greatness and grandeur of England is owing to the Whig, the more the Liberal is bound to defend it from attack or danger. In proportion as the Liberal is proud of his Whig victories, so ought he to resist the destruction of their glorious results. It is not the Conservative, the Tory, the Unionist Liberal alone that are bound as by a sacred trust to defend the boasted

results of Whig policy. It is the Liberal party as a whole, as a mass, who, if political consistency is still a living factor in political life, are bound to don their armour, and prove themselves true to the principles of the Revolution from which they date their mission. It was often jestingly attributed to them that they, after the Revolution, had a mission to go forth on the face of the earth and multiply, and replenish the world with Whig families, who should have the monopoly of the duty to reform mankind; as well as to assimilate the luxuries and good things of office. Seriously, the Whigs went forth indeed, to take a noble part in the History of England; and the greater the measure of the splendour of Whig statecraft the greater will be the shame and humiliation that will fall to the share of the Liberals if they desert the Whig colours.

VIII.

If any Liberals are wavering, let them remember that not a single representative of the great Whig families is to be found in the ranks of those who, calling themselves Liberals, are transforming Liberalism into Revolution. All, or nearly all, the great Whig families of the Revolution have seceded from the Liberal ranks, as they are now led and constituted. They know how the old Whig would despise the Liberal if he could see him in the ranks of those who wish to place a Unicameran Government in the name of Democracy, with its absolute dictatorship and its closure, its absolute power over freedom of speech, in the hands of a single Democratic Assembly—without a controlling power. If such a “shade” as that

of the old Whig could revisit the "glimpses of the moon," could see the deeds that are now done in the name of Liberalism, and could contrast the memories of the old Whig glories—and all their memorable victories in the happy days of old, with the present state of the Whig Party, he might indeed shed tears (if "shades can weep?") of bitterness, and acknowledge the truths in a political sense,—of the words of Dante.

*"Nessun maggior dolore
 "Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
 "Nella miseria."*

To remember in the hours of Whig degeneracy and the disruption of the Liberal Party, the Reform Act of 1832, the equalization of all religious beliefs, the abolition of those disabilities which kept whole classes of the community from participating in political and municipal life on account of their creeds, to think of such deeds in the days of Whig despondency, and transformation, when the Whig has become a Liberal, and the Liberal a Democrat and the Democrat a Revolutionist crying for Unicameran Parliaments and popular supremacy over the Crown, would be intolerable anguish. And such recollections of such a past, with its visions of political happiness, would be all the more intolerable from the very brilliance of what they recalled, contrasted with the darkness of the present hour of grief, and regret, in which they have come back so vividly to his mind. We, therefore, as Constitutionalists, look to the main body of the Liberal Party to help us in this great struggle. We say that they are Whigs, and, as Whigs, cannot tolerate a "Unicameran" Government

with absolute power. The traditions of the Liberal Party are the traditions of the Whigs. These traditions are as sacred a trust in the hands of the Liberals as the traditions of the Revolution were in the hands of the Whigs. Will the Liberals—can the Liberals—join hands with the Democratic Party, and destroy the principles of free Government, which date from the great Revolution? We hold that to give the Commons absolute supremacy over the Crown as well as the nation is a Revolution which is in direct defiance of the principles of the old Whig Party. Will the Liberals—can they—help to light the torch which will consign to the flames all the fruits of the hard-won victories—as well as the honour—of that great Whig Party which has played so glorious and noble a part in the history of this country, and of which the Liberal Party now holds the glorious heritage in trust.

IX.

One word to the Radicals of to-day—to the Democrats of the future. If a statesman ever lived to whom you, as the “People” of this country, owe a debt which nothing can repay, it is Mr. Bright. He was your friend when you had but few. He did not wait for the flood tide of democracy to sail in on its flowing waters, as your Democratic leaders believe they are doing now. He stood alone, almost alone, when to stand alone required unselfish fortitude, and the courage of a hero. The smug patriots who lead you now do so without fear of the hostility—the calumny—the endless hate which beat like an angry sea against the rock on

which Mr. Bright, as it were, stood with unflinching steadfastness, and which would have daunted many a heart less brave than that of your great advocate. To him, more than to Sir Robert Peel, you owe it that your bread is cheap. To him, more than to Lord Russell—or Lord Grey—or even Mr. Gladstone, you owe the possession of the political power you possess—and the franchise, under which you exercise that power. In those gloomy days of your fortunes to advocate your rights—to call for cheaper food for you—was to call down on the head of your advocate the penalties of social ostracism. Mr. Bright never flinched from his fearless defence of you. Would Mr. Morley and the Chancellor of Exchequer have fought for you as Mr. Bright did? He would be a bold man who would say so. Bright cheapened your loaf and championed your rights with Roman fearlessness—alone, amidst a storm of political hate, surging around him—when Radicalism was not as fashionable a creed for a politician as Democracy is now—alone, almost, he stood—with nothing but his own dauntless bravery and unalterable fidelity to you to guide and serve him in his great battles for you. He was the idol of you, “the People,” because he understood your wants, your necessities, your rights. Will the men of the Midlands ever forget their great Member of Parliament? Do you, as Radicals, owe him nothing but empty words? Well, but if you admit your idolatry, if you owe him this debt of gratitude, if you are worthy of what he did for you why not try to repay it in the manner which would best honour his

memory, by following the great principles of policy which were the guiding star of his life—the principles of loyalty to the Crown and loyalty to the People? Will you follow Mr. Bright, and be loyal to the Throne, as he was, or will you follow Mr. Morley, and destroy the Crown? Follow your idol's precepts and you would put your feet on the neck of Unicameral Government and stamp the very life out of a Single Chamber. If you have one spark of gratitude for John Bright and for his memory, you would not destroy a Legislature which, even in the midst of your strongest trials, he never proposed to destroy. There were times in your history—in Mr. Bright's career, when, if he had so minded, and had lifted up his hand to do violence to the Upper House and the Throne, you would have followed him to the death, in your tens of thousands, whithersoever he led. But he never overstepped the bounds of loyalty to his Sovereign. If he did not do so in days when your abject state might have justified almost an appeal to violence, why are you now, in your days of comfort—of comparative luxury,—to do what he, as your leader, refused to do in the days of your extreme provocation? When you are asked to vote for a "Paramount" People's Chamber, read your champion's speeches from end to end, and you will not find in them one syllable of disloyalty. You are now asked to be disloyal to the Crown. Be loyal to John Bright. No man can vote for a "Paramount" Chamber and be loyal to the Crown. Would Mr. Bright ever have been disloyal to the Crown? If not, he would never have voted for a Unicameral Government.

If you believe—and it is impossible to disbelieve it, that you cannot vote for the “Unicameran Government” without being disloyal to the Crown ; why should you now renounce your allegiance to your old idol ? Why forget his teachings and his memory ? It is not that time—long years—have gone by and brought a change in the state of the nation and the mind of the people. Ten—twenty—thirty years are little in the history of a nation, and not a single grievance exists now which did not exist in the life of John Bright. What has changed between the time when Mr. Bright left you and Mr. Morley appears to you that should make what was right in Mr. Bright’s time, wrong now in Mr. Morley’s ? Nothing—absolutely nothing ! Why then will you renounce the guidance of your idol before his ashes have had time to grow cold in his grave ? Why will you be false to the doctrines of the man who led you, and whom you trusted—and who had, more perhaps than any other man, made you what you are, great, powerful, and free ? Be grateful to his memory, and show it by following his guidance. You have to choose between the Bright who knew you, loved you, fought for you—and the Morleys and Roseberys of the day ! Will you be false to the memory of your old chief and

“Forget Pizarro to shout Bolivar.”

Forget such a Pizarro for such Bolivars ! When you are asked to make the People’s Chamber “paramount” in the State at the expense of the Crown, do not forget the words of your dead chieftain when he told you at Birmingham in 1866—“There is no man in England less likely to speak irreverently of the Crown

“and Monarchy than I am.” Do not forget his words, “I will stand by the Constitution.” And he did so,—and, unless he was false to every word he had uttered,—and those who knew John Bright would know what that assumption means—he would have “stood by the Constitution” in these days while he had the breath of life within him. When, as the great electoral struggle approaches,—the National Liberal Association, or the emissaries of that party, invite you to use your voting power, which you owe to John Bright more than to any other statesman—to use that very franchise to “make “the House of Commons the ‘paramount’ authority “in the State”—then, if you honour your dead benefactor, let his living voice be heard again in every workshop—in every factory—in every cottage throughout the land, wherever the artizan, the mill-hand, the labourer, are eating the food he made cheaper—and living in homes he made happier, and let your reply to those who would lead you astray from the path he would have had you follow—and to which he, even now, as it were, beckons you from the grave, let your reply be the echo of his own living words, “I am in accord “with our ancient Constitution. I will stand by it—I will “be guided by its lights. They have been kept burning “by great men among our forefathers for many genera- “tions. Our only safety in this warfare is in adhering “to the ancient and noble Constitution of our country.”* No man ever acted more fearlessly on such principles than Mr. Bright. Radical, if you please—but Revolutionist, never,—the welfare of the People if you like,

* Mr. Bright's Speech on Reform, at Manchester, Nov. 20, 1866.

but the safety of the Constitution as well. Will Mr. Morley, the doctrinaire Democrat of to-day, be a safer, truer guide to you, the People of England, in a day of danger, than the Radical, John Bright?

PART VIII.

I.

I suggest that if the movement for placing the authority of the Lower House over the Crown develops itself, and if the electorate declares itself in favour of this policy, the Loyalists of this country should at once form a "Loyalist League," and present an address to the Throne imploring the Sovereign to refuse his assent to any measure for the alteration or overthrow of the Constitution, and assuring him of our devoted support in whatever shape and to whatever extent he may require it. The object of this "Loyalist League" would be to take up the running at the point where Conservative Associations end. Conservative Unions and Primrose Leagues bring us only to the polling booths. The Loyalists' League should begin where they leave off, and end—wherever our duty calls us. It may be asked why there should be such need for such a "League" when the Crown would have ample protection and defence from the ordinary forces of the State? I answer that at the time we should come to the front there would not be a soldier in the service of the Crown. I am dealing with a period when, if the Sovereign had refused to yield to the revolutionary Commons, and the Commons had, in consequence of that refusal, used the great weapon of terrorism, the stoppage of supply to the Crown, the Sovereign would have to rely for his safety solely on those voluntary

organizations and forces which were independent of Parliamentary grants and beyond the control of a revolutionary Chamber. Besides, the existence of such an organization as I propose, at the moment when the Commons were only threatening to refuse to grant supply to the Crown, and so to paralyze the whole working of the machinery of the State, would give invaluable aid, at a most critical moment, to the Sovereign; when the hour had come for him to choose between surrender and disgrace—and peace—on one side—on the other, between a refusal—and honour—and a conflict with the Commons. In that moment of incalculable interest, the knowledge that thousands of loyalists stood fairly well organised, ready and eager to take the place, as well as they could, of the regular forces which would be disbanded through the stoppage of supply by Parliament, might nerve and steel the Sovereign's heart in such a fearful ordeal, if (and a Sovereign's heart is not usually dead to the kindlier feelings of nature) the Sovereign wavered for an instant in his duty, and shrank from the shedding of English blood. At that moment on this "Loyalist League" might depend the final decision of the Sovereign, and in its hands might rest the issues of the future destinies of this Empire for generations to come. The object, therefore, of this League would be to neutralize and minimize as far as practicable the influence on the Sovereign's mind of the threat to stop supplies—and also to have a force ready to be something of an equivalent—a very inadequate one, but still a valuable one—for those forces which would be dispersed and unavailable, if the threat to stop supply was carried into execution.

Such a force would be by no means ineffective in parrying the blow from the weapon—the stoppage of supply—on which the Commons would rely, as a last resort, as an irresistible force for terrorizing the Sovereign into submission. The Loyalist League would be called into existence to meet as far as possible the threats or the stoppage itself of supply, if any Minister, however democratic, could be found who would prove so false to his country as to even threaten, much less to carry his threat into execution, to leave it without the means of defence or resistance, naval or military, and to lay England at the mercy of the first Continental Foreign Power which chose to avail itself of this chaotic confusion and defencelessness to march to London.

II.

We would appeal to loyal English Manhood wherever it may be found—scattered it may be throughout the world—in India, in Australia, in Canada, to join in this Address and to support the proposed League. If this Address was laid at the foot of the Throne by 500,000 Loyalists, its presentation would be a lasting landmark of patriotism, towering above the centuries, in the Constitutional history of this Empire, as well as a ringing note of defiance to the enemies of the Throne. And we would look to the loyal Womanhood of England to help us and to give us the invaluable aid of their support in this cause of loyalty. In an infinity of ways they could serve the cause, and strengthen the hands and the hearts of the loyalists. Not by screaming music-hall ditties at farmers' ordinaries, or thumping

banjos, but by methods better adapted to English ladyhood—that is, of English ladyhood before it came under the softening influence of refined democratic customs. The admirable exertions of ladies in their Primrose Leagues, which have proved themselves a powerful factor in politics, could be exercised with graceful power in the organization of the Loyalist League. No recruiting sergeant would be so irresistible as an English lady. Shall we appeal in vain?

PART IX.

I.

What then is it our duty to do? Combine and organize.* Our cause is a noble one—resistance to revolution—resistance to the tyranny of a democratic government uncontrolled—the support of a Throne. Our fathers before us were no cowards when appeals were made to their patriotism. Are we less men than they were? What happened in 1848? The Chartists alarmed the country with demands which were supposed to be dangerous to the institutions of the country. These terrible demands, which so affrighted our fathers, were called the “Six Points of the Charter,” and were these:—Universal suffrage; Vote by ballot; Division of the country into electoral districts; Annual Parliaments; Abolition of property qualification; Payment of members. Several of those alarming demands are long since Acts of Parliament, some of these were proposed and carried by Conservative administrations. How small, paltry, and miserable these demands appear when compared with the demand for the abolition of the Lords, and the overthrow of the Crown. But small and contemptible as they now seem, they called forth a patriotic protest from a loyal people in the form of 150,000 men, who, in the Metropolis alone, formed up their ranks to oppose the Six Points of the Charter and the Chartist movement. If

* The details of such organization will be suggested at another opportunity if the proposal contained in this Essay meets with approval.

150,000 men came forth to oppose the mere shadow of a revolution what ought to be our response when dangers a thousand-fold greater than those Six Points are upon us? Are we less men than our fathers? Again, in recent times, when the Ulstermen of the North of Ireland saw their liberties and principles threatened by the proposed creation of an Irish Parliament, which would have been an unsupportable tyranny over them, over their political independence, over their religion; did they hesitate to beat to arms and organise their forces to oppose that intolerable tyranny to the death? Are we to be less men than the Ulstermen of Ireland when we are threatened with an attack on principles as sacred to us Englishmen as those for which Ulster was ready to fight? And again, when the Southern States of America in 1861 seceded from the Federal Union, the citizens of the Northern States flew to arms to preserve the Union of their States. Was the preservation of the Union more dear to the Americans than the preservation of the constitution of this country is to thousands and thousands of Englishmen? Are we less men than the Americans? In a word, are we to submit to the destruction of our constitution and to the substitutions of an experimental legislature, and to the certain tyranny and despotism of a democratic dictatorship? In the words of Sir Robert Peel, "No, never will such tyranny be borne!"

II.

Combine then, and organize. It would be folly

to fold our arms, indulging in dreams of a false security, which does not exist. It is folly and silliness to treat with contempt and neglect a movement which is led by Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery, by the Cabinet, by all the Ministers, and adopted by the Liberal Party, and by the National Liberal Association, which, it is useless to ignore, are the recognised representatives of Liberal opinion. As the Secretary for Ireland says, "The movement must go on." Therefore, shut your eyes if you will, close your ears if you like, but it would be a negation of the senses God has given us if we, as intelligent beings, refused any longer to acknowledge the sound of the rising tide of a democratic revolution which is even now rippling against the very steps of the Throne. The movement must go on, the conflict must take place. Victory will follow the forces, the readiest, the best equipped. Organized wealth and force will prevail over undisciplined numbers, however great. Our cause is our Constitution and our Monarchy! We have been taught by the American States that after the issues which cannot be peacefully settled have been submitted to the arbitrament of war, it is possible for the victor and the vanquished to live together again in harmony and peace. May it be so with us! But now we have to prepare and combine. Combine and organize! and then with unflinching hearts, in tones of defiance to our foes which shall not be misunderstood, with a voice which will ring not only throughout England but through the listening nations of the world, we will say to our Sovereign, "If you call us, we will come!"

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